Lectures on Religion, Sikh Identity And Politics in the Punjab

J. S. Grewal

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LECTURES ON RELIGION, SIKH IDENTITY AND POLITICS IN THE PUNJAB

by J. S. GREWAL

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DEPARTMENTAL NOTE

It is evident from the name of Punjabi University, Patiala, that it was established to promote Punjabi Language, Literature and Culture. Keeping this in view, the University established the Department of Development of Punjabi Language in 1965. Since its beginning the Department is engaged in various types of literary and cultural activities. Production of source material, making available scientific literature in Punjabi, and translation of best literary works in different languages into Punjabi are among the major schemes of the Department.

The Department feels pride in publishing lectures on history, society and culture of the Punjab by Dr. J.S. Grewal, a leading scholar of Sikh history, who served as Vice-Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, from 1981 to 1984 and Director of Indian Institute of Advanced Study at Shimla from 1989 to 1993.

We are sure that this work will be a great contribution to the study of Sikh history and that readers will warmly welcome it.

Dept. of Development of Pbi. Language Punjabi University, Patiala. Jasbir Kaur (Dr.) Head

PREFACE

I was invited by the Punjabi University, Patiala, as a Visiting Professor of History in 2006 for two years to deliver lectures on themes of historical interest. I was able to give more than eighty lectures with the help of the Head and faculty members of the Department of History and the Heads of the Departments of Punjab Historical Studies, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, Fine Arts, Guru Granth Sahib Studies, Distance Education, Religious Studies, and the Department of Development of Punjabi Language. The Punjabi University decided to publish the lectures related to the Punjab, its history, society and culture. The first volume was published in 2007, and three more were prepared subsequently. These four volumes contain more than fifty lectures on languages and literature of the region, works of historical and creative literature, Sufi and Sikh religious poetry in Punjabi, Sufi and Sikh religious institutions, social order with special reference to caste and gender, Punjab politics and Sikh polity, Sikh identity, agrarian relations and urbanization, and popular religions and literary culture. Thus, the lectures cover a wide range of themes related to the history, society and culture of the Punjab, based almost entirely on primary sources.

I hope these lectures would be of interest to historians and useful for researchers and students. I am grateful to the University authorities who made these lectures and their publication possible. I am thankful to the Heads of the University Departments who organized these lectures and to the faculty members and scholars who raised questions or gave comments in the course of the long

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series of lectures. Foremost among the historians who took interest in the content of these lectures and gave many valuable suggestions was Professor Indu Banga. I am grateful to her. I am thankful to Dr Karamjit K. Malhotra, a Research Fellow of the Indian Council of Historical Research at the Panjab University, Chandigarh, at that time and now an Assistant Professor in the Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, who attended all the lectures and was very helpful in preparing the volumes for publication, giving some suggestions in the process. For secretarial assistance I am thankful to Ms. Ramneek Minhas, Ms. Satnam Mehra, Ms. Parneet Minhas, Ms. Komal Gakhkhar and Ms. Priyanka Kalia.

I am grateful to Dr Jaspal Singh, Vice Chancellor, Punjabi University, Patiala, for his appreciative Foreword which says all that could be said about this publication in a few words. I am thankful to Professor Dhanwant Kaur, Director, Publication Bureau, for her interest in the publication of these volumes. Among her colleagues in the Publication Bureau, S. Harjit Singh has been associated with this publication since the very beginning. I am happy to acknowledge his help.

Department of Punjab Historical Studies Punjabi University, Patiala

J.S. Grewal
Professor of Eminence

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INTRODUCTION

The lectures included in this volume are given in five parts. The first part deals with the rise and fall of Buddhism in the Punjab. Not unknown before the time of Ashoka, Buddhism made a remarkable progress during his reign. At the end of the fourth century, both the Little Vehicle (Hinayana) and the Great Vehicle (Mahayana) were 'honoured' in the Punjab. Kanishka was seen as the second great patron of Buddhism after Ashoka, and the Mahayana form appears to have become more popular. A profound influence of Buddhism is reflected in the Gandhara school of art in its three phases. In the early seventh century, there were eighteen pre-eminent schools of Buddhism at variance with one another. The attitude of Brahmans towards them was hostile. The Punjab region was dotted with thousands of monasteries and stupas but many of them were either totally abandoned or on the decline. Mihirakula was regarded as the destroyer of Buddhism. In the eighth century Tantirc elements began to enter Buddhism. By the early eleventh century, Buddhism had yielded place to Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism as the dominant systems of religious beliefs and practices. Buddhism vanished from the Punjab but not without leaving many traces and legacies behind.

The second part consists of lectures on the Sants: Kabir, Ravidas and Dadu. They are called Sants in order to distinguish them from the Vaishnava *bhagats*. The Sants were monotheists: they did not subscribe to the idea of incarnation or to the practice of idol-worship in temples. They used multiple epithets for God, both Hindu and Muslim, for the one God who was onmipotent and omnipresent. His worship in dedication and love alone could lead to liberation-in-life,

but never without His grace. Kabir, Ravidas and Dadu, thus, shared much common ground. None of them aligned himself with any existing system of religious beliefs and practices, whether Islamic or Hindu (non-Muslim). However, there were some important differences also among them. Kabir favoured ahimsa and renunciation and he had no interest in institutionalization. He chose no successor and there was no Kabir-Panth till the early seventeenth century. Vaishnavization of Kabir's legacy began with its institutionalization, and the bulk of his followers came to be seen as Hindus. Ravidasis appeared on the scene much later that the Kabir-Panthis. Dadu chose his eldest son Garib Das as his successor at Naraina (Dudu-Dwara). Jait Ram, who was elected as the head in the 1690s, did not belong to Dadu's family and his successors remained celibates like him. Apart from its ascetics, the Dadu-Panth had its lay members and a militant group called the Nagas. The followers of Kabir, Ravidas and Dadu were represented in the Punjab but in very small numbers.

In the third part, the lecture on the bani of Guru Amar Das shows how he reinforced and amplified Guru Nanak's message and strengthened the institution of congregational worship and langar. His bani reflects his social concerns and also an awareness of opposition from within and outside. Quite overtly, he invites the Brahman, the Jogi and the Shaikh to follow the path of Guru Nanak. The bani of Guru Ram Das carries forward the same concerns for Sikh ideology, institutions and the Sikhs. The bani and the Guru are equated; the Sikh and the Guru are equated; the Sangat is exalted. The composition of Lavan, the excavation of a sarovar, and the founding of a township reflect Guru Ram Das's care for the social, religious and temporal needs of his followers. His bani reflects greater awareness of internal and external opposition and he reassures the Sikhs that God was on their side. In the bani of Guru Ram Das 'God enters history through the Guru, his bani and his Sikhs for the redemption of the world as an expression of the divine will'. The Sikhs of the Guru could not be bracketed with any other set of people

in the world. The lecture on Sikh identity starts with the statements of the Sikh and Muslim writers of the eighteenth century on the distinct identity of the Sikhs. The contemporary evidence of the Dabistan-i Mazahib on this point takes us back to the midseventeenth century. For the contribution of Guru Nanak and his first four successors to the formation of Sikh identity, both objectively and subjectively, reference is made to their compositions. One of the major preoccupation of Bhai Gurdas in the early seventeenth century was to project the Sikh faith and those who cherished this faith as clearly distinct from all other faiths and peoples known to him.

In the fourth part of the volume, consisting of four lectures, it is argued that Christian presence in the colonial Punjab enhanced concern for matters religious among all the three religious communities of the Punjab, leading to socio-religious resurgence and intercommunal competition. Resurgence among the Sikhs was spearleaded by the Singh Sabhas to redefine Sikh doctrines, the Sikh way of life, and Sikh identity in the light of the past and the contemporary needs of the Sikh Panth. The Singh Sabha Movement provided a comprehensive interpretation of the earlier Sikh tradition, combined with modern outlook, attitudes, and institutions. The nature of its response to the colonial environment made it far more influential than the other Sikh movements like the Nirankari and the Namdhari. Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, one of the most important protagonists of the movement and perhaps its best exponent, addressed his scholarly Ham Hindu Nahin (We are not Hindus), to both Hindus and Sikhs who looked upon Sikh identity as a new issue because they were not thoroughly familiar with the early Sikh tradition. Basing himself entirely on pre-colonial Sikh literature, he argued that a distinct Sikh identity had been formed in the time of the Sikh Gurus and reinforced by the institution of the Khalsa. His basic point was that if 'Hindu' meant a non-Muslim, the Sikhs were Hindus. But if 'Hindu' carried some religious connotation then the Sikhs were not Hindus. In the last

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lecture included in this part, the views of W.H. McLeod, Harjot Oberoi and G.S. Dhillon on Sikhs identity are analysed to assess their validity in the light of credible evidence and the question of conceptualization, and to suggest that objective realities and subjective self-image are intermeshed in a consciousness of distinct identity in relation to others. Sikh identity had an objective base and the consciousness of its distinct character emerged early in Sikh history. This consciousness was emphatically reinforced by the Khalsa, and Singh identity became 'the Sikh Identity' for the majority of the Sikhs before the colonial rule was established in the Punjab. This identity was sought to be clearly defined and sharpened by the protagonists and exponents of the Singh Sabha Movement.

In the fifth part it is argued that the politics of the Shiromani Akali Dal and Sant Jarnail Singh of Damdami Taksal were based on Sikh identity. Akali politics had been constitutional or agitational till 1947 even when they asked for a Sikh State in 1945-46 primarily to gain some political advantage for the Sikhs. They pursued this policy consistently till 1984. The idea of Khalistan had begun to be aired in the early 1970s by individuals without any following worth the name. Sant Jarnail Singh shared his ideology with the Akalis with greater emphasis on the symbols of Sikh identity. Whereas the Akalis subscribed to the idea that force could be used as a last resort but the time for resorting to the sword had not come, Sant Jarnail Singh favoured the use of force wherever necessary. In short, he subscribed to militancy. But even Sant Jarnail Singh did not demand Khalistan. The movement for Khalistan was strictly a post-1984 phenomenon and the Akalis had nothing to do with it. Later on, the Akali leaders made compromises with the Khalistani militants, but without accepting their ideology.

Part I A FORGOTTEN LEGACY

1

RISE AND FALL OF BUDDHISM IN THE PUNJAB

Though Buddhism was not unknown in the Punjab before Ashoka, his reign marked an important phase in the history of Buddhism in this region. There are some minor inscriptions in which his concern for Buddhism finds expression.1 He professes his faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. He underlines the importance of certain sermons, as on the excellence of the discipline, the lineage of the noble one, the future fears, the verses of the sage, the sutra of silence, and the admonition of Rahula on the subject of false speech. The laity and the monks were expected to meditate frequently on these sermons. At the place of the Buddha's birth, the emperor got a stone pillar erected, with a stone enclosure around it, and exempted the village of Lumbini from tax. Ashoka was seriously concerned with the unity of the Sangha. Any monk or nun who created a schism was to be dressed in white garments of sent away. This order was to be endorsed by laymen on the days of confession and penance, and also by special officers. There is no doubt about the emperor's deep interest in Buddhism. Understandably, he sent missionaries to various parts of the Indian subcontinent, including Gandhara and Kashmir.

No discussion of Buddhism under Ashoka can be complete without his Dhamma. The pillar inscription at Topra in the east of the Punjab and the rock inscriptions at Mansehra and Shahbazgarhi in its north-west show that Ashoka did not equate Dhamma with Buddhism. His conception of Dhamma was primarily ethical. In the pillar edict of Topra it is stated that 'happiness' in this world

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and in the next is difficult to secure without intense love of Dhamma which consists of 'the least amount of sin, many virtuous deeds, compassion, liberality, truthfulness and purity'. The passions that lead to sin are 'such as violence, cruelty, anger, vanity and jealousy'. The rājukās, placed over many hundred thousands of souls, are entrusted with the control of 'the award of rewards or the imposition of punishment.' Impartiality in their proceedings and judgements is expected to promote 'the welfare and happiness of the country people'. Having the propagation of Dhamma in view, Ashoka 'set up pillars bearing records relating to Dhamma, appointed Mahamatras to deal with the affairs connected with Dhamma, and issued proclamations on Dhamma'. For the same purpose, banyan tress and mango groves were planted along the roads to provide shade for beasts and men, wells were excavated at intervals of 8 krohs, and rest houses were constructed. The 'Dhamma-Mahamatras' were occupied not only with the affairs of the Buddhist Sangha but also with the Brahmanas, the Ajivikas, the Nirgranthas and with all the other religious groups 'not specifically mentioned'. Among the good deeds are 'obedience to mother and father, obedience to elders, courtesy to the aged, courtesy to the Brahmanas and Shramanas, to the poor and the distressed, and even to slaves and servants'.

In the rock inscriptions at Mansehra and Shahbazgarhi, we are told that the 'Dhamma-Mahamatras' are occupied with 'all the religious sects' for the establishment and promotion of Dhamma 'even among the Yavanas, Kambojas and Gandharas, the Rashtrikas and Paitryanikas and the other people dwelling about the western borders of my dominions'. They are occupied with the welfare and happiness of 'the servile class and the community of traders and agriculturists as well as the Brahmanas and the ruling class and likewise of the destitute and the aged'. Their concern extends to prisoners in all cities and towns. 'King Priyadarshi, Beloved of the gods, wishes that all religious sects should live harmoniously in all parts of his dominions'. The common objective of all religious groups is 'self-control and purity of thought'. If a person does

not possess these, his liberality is worthless. People perform various ceremonies on the occasion of illness, weddings, births, setting out on journeys and on similar other occasions. The women-folk in particular perform many ceremonies which are 'trivial and meaningless'. The ceremonies associated with Dhamma, on the other hand, produce great results: 'proper courtesy to slaves and servants, reverence to elders, restraints in one's dealings with living beings and liberality to the Shramanas and Brahmanas'. Whereas the other ceremonies may at best 'produced result in this world only', the ceremonies connected with the Dhamma earn 'endless merit' for the next world even if they do not produce results for this world. 'Only the happiness of the people in the next world is what is regarded by the Beloved of the gods as a great thing'. This was ensured not by armed conquest but by 'conquest through Dhamma'.

The evidence of the inscriptions clearly indicates that the Dhamma of Ashoka was essentially an ethical pattern devised on the basis of a variety of religious and moral teachings of contemporary thinkers. Since he himself was a Buddhist, the Buddhist strand in the pattern is more evident than the rest. But to equate his Dhamma with Buddhism is incorrect, and to maintain that the Dhamma was an attempt to make Buddhism the state religion would be unjust. Ashoka's equal regard for the Shramanas and the Brahmanas comes out clearly. Among the Shramanas were not only the Buddhists but also the Ajivikas and the Jains. Furthermore, religious groups 'not specifically mentioned' are also bracketed with them. The Brahmanas were surely represented in the Punjab, and so were the Buddhists and some other ascetics.

H

The oldest and the most orthodox form of Buddhism was known as Theravada, and its most important branch as Sarvastivada. Both became popular in northern India, and spread to Gandhara and Kashmir before and after the Christian era. This form of Buddhism came to be known as the Little Vehicle (Hinayana) when

a new form came to be recognized by the time of Kanishka and spread all over north India. It was known as the Great Vehicle (Mahayana). Its hallmark was the doctrine of the bodhisattva. It was believed that the Buddha in his previous lives had worked selflessly for the good of all but bided his Buddhahood. The appearance of the Bodhisattva in Gandhara sculpture is clear evidence of the popularity of Mahayana. In fact, three important Bodhisattvas figure prominently in the Gandhara art: Maitreya, Avalokiteshvara and Manjushri. The practice of image worship and the idea of bhakti also became an integral part of Mahayana Buddhism.

At the end of fourth century AD, Fah Hian observed that the law of the Buddha was universally honoured. The monks had their fixed abodes in sangharamanas. In Udyana, 500 monasteries belonged to the Little Vehicle. In Bannu there were about 3,000 monks of the Little Vehicle. About the same number of monks in Rishi belonged to both the Little and the Great Vehicle. It was believed that the Buddha had personally visited Udyana. The Swat valley was associated with a Bodhisattva who had saved a dove from a hawk by giving his own flesh. In Gandhara a Bodhisattva was believed to have sacrificed his eyes, the people had erected a tower on that spot.

Fah Hian believed that the tower raised by Kanishka at Peshawer had been prophesied by the Buddha. His alms bowl was preserved in another monastery and every kind of religious honour was paid to it daily in the forenoon and the evening. The offerings of the poor were believed to be more gratifying to the Buddha. The relic of the skullbone of the Buddha in a Vihara was covered with plates of gold and decorated with 'the seven precious substances'. The king used to offer flowers and incense and repeatedly bend his head to the ground in adoration. Only after this morning worship did he attend to public affairs: 'the chief men and nobles also attend to these acts of worship first, and then to their household duties.' This was their unfailing duty every day. The relic was returned to its shrine after the worship was

over. Flowers and incense were sold at the gate of the Vihara every morning. All the neighbouring princes deputed commissioners to present religious offerings to the relics. The Buddha's tooth relic was in Nagrak and it was worshipped in the same way as his skull-bone. The Buddha's staff was in a Vihara not far from Nagrak. The Buddha's robe (sanghati), in a distant Vihara, was worshipped with devotion to bring rain in a drought. In a cave not far from Nagrak the Buddha had left his shadow. It could be seen by the devout from a distance of ten paces but vanished on going nearer. Close to this cave was a tower raised in honour of those who had attained Buddhahood for themselves. In Taxila the Buddha had sacrificed his head as a Bodhisattva and that was why the country was called Takshashila or 'the severed head'. At Manikyala, the Buddha was believed to have fed his body to a starving tiger. The stupas raised at these two places were among the four known as 'the Great Stupas' in the northwest. Fah Hian observed that 'kings, ministers, and people of all the surrounding countries vie with each other in making religious offerings at these places, in scattering flowers, and burning incense continually'. In Pi-cha, which may be taken as a reference to Bhera, the Law of the Buddha was 'prosperous and flourishing'. This was true of both the Little and the Great Vehicle. The people of this country were surprised but gratified to see devotees coming from China to seek the Law of the Buddha. Fah Hian does not appear to have passed through the northern Punjab on his way to Mathura. He noticed a large number of temples with over 10,000 priests on his way to Mathura, but he gives no detail.

Some general observations made by Fah Hian are quite significant. Since the Buddha's nirvāṇa, the kings and nobles of 'all these countries' had been erecting Viharas for the monks and endowing them with lands, gardens, houses, and 'also men and oxen to cultivate them'. The records of these endowments were engraved on plates of copper and handed down from one king to another 'so that no one has dared to deprive them of possession, and they continue to this day to enjoy their proper revenues'. All

the resident monks had chambers, beds, coverlets, food, drink and clothes provided for them 'without stint or reserve'. For their part, the monks continually engaged in work of benevolence, recitation of scriptures, and meditation. In all monasteries, towers were raised in honour of the Buddha's famous disciples: Sariputra, Mogalana and Ananda. Towers were raised also in honour of the three Pitakas: the Abhidhamma, the Vinaya and the Sutta. Exhorted by the principal religious families in the neighbourhood after the first month of residence, the monks assembled in a great congregation and repeated the Law. 'They present religious offerings to the tower of Sariputra, every kind of incense and flowers, and through the night they burn lamps provided by those men for the purpose.' Women ascetics had 'requested Buddha to permit females to become disciples'. The novices (samaneras) were particular about worshipping Rahula, the son of the Buddha by his wife Yashodhara. The professors of the Abhidhamma paid religious offerings to that work, and the masters of the Vinaya did the same honour to theirs. The men of the Great Vehicle worshipped Prajna Paramitra who symbolized divine wisdom, Manjushri who underscored the idea that all creatures have the nature of the Buddha, and Avalokiteshvara who as the 'saviour of men' symbolized intense love for man.

At the beginning of the fifth century, Buddhism was flourishing in many parts of India. The sages of Hinayana Buddhism were elucidating their doctrines and elaborating their rituals and ceremonies, and two schools had emerged in the process. One of these was the Sautrantika based on the Sutras and Sutrantas. Its founder was Kumaralabdha, a native of Takshashila, who came to be regarded as one of the 'four suns' of India. The three others were Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva. The second school, known as the Vaibhashika, gave greater important to commentaries (vibhasha) on Katyayanputra's Jnanaprasthanasutra, the principal Abhidharma text of Sarvastivadin Hinayana. The Sanskrit Vibhasha was attributed to Ashvaghosha. Among the eminent teachers of the school were Dharmatrata, Vasumitra, Buddhadeva, Dharmottara,

and Ghoshaka. One of the classic texts of Buddhism was produced by Vashubandhu, a native of Gandhara, who studied the Vibhashas in Kashmir and wrote his Abhidharmakosha and its Bhashya.

The Mahayana form of Buddhism had become more prevalent than Hinayana. The two forms did not differ so much in the rules of monastic life as in doctrine and the modes of worship. The Mahayanists regarded the Buddha as eternal and beyond description. They advocated complete detachment, even from the monk's robe, and absolute renunciation even of the desire for nirvāņa. Self-effacement was to be sought not for one's own nirvāņa but for the service of others, not in one but several lives. This altruistic ideal was the hallmark of Mahayanism. The Mahayanist monk had to pursue 'perfections' (paramitas) such as liberality (dana) and knowledge of the truth (prajna). These 'perfections' had to be relentlessly pursued in a number of 'births', leading to the state of bodhi-chitta. After many lives of altruistic service as Bodhisattva, he was destined to attain to nirvana and to become Buddha. Two schools of thought arose in Mahayanism too: the Madhyamika, with Nagarjuna as its accredited founder, and the Yogachara, with Ashvaghosha, as its putative founder. Maitreya's Abhisamayalankara-Kartika was an authoritative text of the Yogacharas. Among the luminaries of this school were Asangha of Ayodhya and his younger brother Vasubhandhu of Nalanda, both natives of Gandhara.

There is hardly any doubt that some of the rulers of the Punjab patronized Buddhism.⁶ Menander would not have been extolled so much by the Buddhists if he had not accepted their faith or championed their cause. The association of Kanishka with Buddhism and his patronage of the Buddhists is even more certain. A few other Kushana rulers also patronized Buddhism. Among the Buddhists there was no problem about admitting foreigners because ritual ranking was not so important for them as for the Brahmans, and Buddhism did not oblige its new adherents to discard their earlier cults. It was open to mlechhas. The Kushana patronized not only Buddhism but also the Sanskrit language and

Vaishnavism and Shaivism. Their example was followed by the members of their ruling class. Patronage of religion was a means to legitimacy.

The mercantile communities were associated with Buddhism even more closely than the ruling class or the rulers.7 The guilds of artisans and traders made endowments to Buddhist Sanghas. Commercial patronage and royal support enabled the latter to raise impressive monuments. Monastic establishments thrived near urban centres and in rich agricultural tracts where there was plenty to support a community of monks. The Buddhist monastery was both a retreat for meditation and an institution of action. Begging for alms and preaching the doctrine brought the monks into contact with the lay community. A distinction was made between the general run of lay followers and the upāsakas who were specially devoted to the Sangha. The majority of these upāsakas were affluent householders (gahapatīs). In any case, the Sangha created a sense of community among the lay followers. Such a sense of community was the antithesis of the norms of varna order. Whereas varna segregated and cordoned off groups of people, Buddhist social thought and practice cut across caste segments and appealed to a universal ethic. In contrast to the Dharmashastras which rated the artisans rather low, the Buddhist Sanghas accepted donations from them, making them socially respectable. Significantly, women gave donations for the building and adornment of stupas, not only queens and princesses but also women belonging to the families of landowners, traders and artisans. Giving donations was an act of piety but it also involved recognition of the authority of the Sangha, which in its turn meant social or political recognition for the donor. It may be added that the Buddhist monasteries served as centres of learning and education.

In the Buddhist texts the Kshatriyas head the list of castes, followed by the Brahmans, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. Furthermore, one does not become a Brahman through inheritance but through conduct. The Brahmans in Buddhist literature follow professions far beyond the orbit of their prescribed duties. They

work as landlords and cultivators, tend cattle and pursue trade, and they act as physicians and architects, besides resorting to several other occupations. The 'castes' other than these four do not result from any infringement of the Brahmanical norms of matrimony, but from the proliferation of occupations and the induction of new peoples into the social order. There were people belonging to hīna jātīs which were regarded as lower than the four castes. Among them were fowlers, leather workers, weavers, potters, barbers, mat-makers and cart-makers. The use of the general term mlechha for such people implied that they were outside the pale of the 'Aryan' society.

In response to the institutionalization of renunciation and asceticism the Brahmans evolved the conception of the four stages or ashramas in life. The first stage, that of the Brahmachari, was the stage of study under a chosen teacher. The second ashrama, that of the grihastha, started with marriage and involved the duties of worship (yajna) and making gifts (dan), besides setting up a home and rearing a family. In the third stage of life one was to pursue a life of restraint and denial. The fourth stage was to be marked by austerities and abstention. The last two ashramas were based on the ideals of renunciation and asceticism. The concept of four ashramas, thus, sanctified the ideal but placed restrictions on its actual operation. One had to be a student and a householder first and only then a renouncer or ascetic. Women and Shudras, were excluded from this scheme. Nevertheless, renunciation and asceticism came to be generally regarded as of great importance in Indian religious life. The renouncer became the symbol of authority, and asceticism continued to find expression in several different ways in the centuries to follow.

III

The influence of Buddhism in the Punjab is reflected in the major artistic expression of the period, the Gandhara School of art.8 It relates primarily to sculpture. In the Gandhara region first, this art flourished for nearly five centuries under the Shakas and the

Kushanas who transmitted the cultural features of both Hellenistic and Indian traditions. Among other themes, the sculptures represent stories and legends from the life of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. The reliefs are faithful to Indian tradition, myths and legends but appear to lack spontaneity and emotional sympathy. The figures of the Buddhist 'pantheon' look like the figures of the Graeco-Roman pantheon, sometimes with a moustache, or a turban, with ornaments. Draperies are arranged in the style of the Roman toga. Indian sages appear to be bearded sages of the classical tradition of Greece and Rome. This is true also of the mythical figures. Nevertheless, the independent and individual statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas appear to have a character and aesthetic value of their own, both in their features and treatment.

It is possible to identify three phases of the Gandhara art. The figures and draperies of the Shaka phase strongly recall Hellenistic ideals. Under the Kushanas began a certain degree of schematization. The drapery is more symmetrical and tends to become a decorative display. The figures are short in stature, stumpy in appearance, and rough in treatment, exhibiting a kind of rude strength. Then from the third century AD, the Gandhara art begins to express an intense feeling, a telling realism, and an individuality of character. It is generally agreed that in its third phase the Gandhara art 'attained a command of form and a vitality of expression' lacking in the earlier period. This was partly due to the fact that clay and stucco were now the materials used in place of stone. The plasticity of new materials could be much better exploited by a good artist.

The eastern Punjab reveals the popularity of the school known after Mathura. The spotted sandstone of Sikri was its identification mark. The Mathura Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are quite distinct from their Gandharan counterparts. However, examples of the refined type of the Gandharan Buddha can be seen in the Mathura region under the Kushanas. Certain reliefs and decorative motifs also reveal Gandharan influence. At the same time, a statue recently

discovered at Karhali in the district of Patiala has a clear affinity with the Mathura school. Numerous beautiful pieces of sculpture in spotted red sandstone have been found at Sanghol. On the whole, probably, the eastern Punjab was culturally closer to Mathura.

Much of the Gandhara sculpture was a part of architecture insofar as it was represented on panels depicting the events of Buddha's life, or the lives of the Bodhisattvas, that adorned stupas and monasteries. The stupa was a sacred structure because it contained a relic of the Buddha, or of one of his chief disciples. It was erected on a spot associated with an event in his life or an important event in the history of Buddhism. Monasteries developed later on spots where the wandering Buddhist monks used to rest during the rainy season. The principal element of the stupa was a dome. It was surmounted by an umbrella (chhatra) and surrounded by a passage for circumambulation (pradakshinapath) generally fenced by a railing or a wall. This plan is clearly demonstrated in the Great Stupa at Manikyala in the upper Sindh Sagar Doab. The structure known as Shahji ki Dheri at Peshawar was built by Kanishka as a relic-tower. It consisted of a basement in five stages with a wooden superstructure of thirteen storeys about 120 metres high. An iron column at the top, with a number of umbrellas, raised the total height of the tower to about 200 metres. It was decorated with every sort of precious substance and it was admired by all for its exquisite beauty and graceful proportions. A monastery was attached to this 'highest tower in Jambudwipa'.

The best known stupas are those of Taxila where more archaeological work has been done than elsewhere. The height of the Dharmarajika stupa in ruins is about 15 metres, and the overall diameter is about 45 metres. The surviving structure is likely to be of the Shaka-Parthian phase. A terrace and four flights of steps at its base were constructed later. The last element to be added was a band of ornamental stonework in probably the fourth or fifth century AD. There were three successive floors of the pradakshinapatha. There was also a lion pillar in imitation of the well known lion pillars of Ashoka. Much later than the foundation

of this Great Stupa, a number of miniature stupas were built in a ring. Such votive stupas have been found in large number at different sites and provide a good idea of what the bigger monuments looked like.

Before the beginning of the Christian era, the stupas had become the nucleus of each monastery (sangharama) and the visible manifestation of the Buddhist faith in India. Monasteries in the north-west had appeared by the first century AD. They consisted of detached structures, each with a specific function. The quadrangular vihār as a single enclosed complex, meant to meet all the needs of the monks, developed as the faith gained popularity and became institutionalized. Close to the Dharmarajika there was a range of apartments for the monks. These buildings were the earliest to appear. Regular vihārs developed later. The mound that covers the ruins of monasteries near the Dharmarajika has an area of about 150 metres from north to south and by about 120 metres from east to west. Not far from the Bhir Mound is a site known as Kalawan, with a stupa and monastery. There were several other important stupas and sangharamas near Taxila, as at Giri, Ghai, Jandial, Mohra Moradu, Pippala, Jaulian, Lalachak and Bhamala.

The information on art and artifacts available for the Sutlej-Jamuna Divide is small but not insignificant. Remains of stupas and monasteries have been found at Sanghol, Sugh, Fatehabad and Bhuna. A sealing from Sanghol depicts three stupas and bears a legend that was regarded as sacred: 'The Buddha has told the cause of all things that proceed from cause, and he has told how the cause comes to its end - such is the word of the sage alone'. Gandhara and Kushana Buddhas and Bodhisattva have been found at Sirsa, Sugh, Jhajar and in the Rohtak district. A Bodhisattva figurine has been found at Sugh. 10

Incidentally, Buddhist literature can be a useful source for the history of the region. For example, Taxila is depicted in the Jatakas as a centre of exchange not only of goods but also of ideas. The city was a great centre of learning. Even if stereotyped, the image invoked by the Jatakas is not without interest or significance. There are over a hundred references to Takkashila (Taxila) as a city, a capital city and a centre of learning. There were teachers of world fame who taught there, often taking upto 500 pupils. Each of them was expected to pay 1,000 pieces of money. A few could be accepted on a promise of payment after the completion of their education. The chief pupil could help the teacher in his tasks, and the teacher was entitled according to the norms of the times to make use of the stick, when it became necessary, even on princes.

The world-famous teachers at Takkashila imparted what may be called higher education. The pupils went there to 'complete' or to 'perfect' their education after having been educated elsewhere till the age of sixteen. The teachers of Takkashila generally admitted to their academies young princes and sons of Brahmans, the youths of warrior and Brahman castes. The Jatakas refer specifically to the princes of Benares, Mithila, Indraprastha, and a Prince of the Shivis, the Brahmans of Kashi, Panchala, a lad of Mithila, a son of the family priest of the Kuru King of Indraprastha. The Brahmans of the north country in general flocked to Takkashila for higher studies. The princes who went there for higher education became viceroys and kings; the Brahmans who went there became ministers, family priests of kings or teachers of world fame at places like Benares. Occasionally, the sons of merchants could be admitted to higher studies at Takkashila, but not Chandalas. Two of the latter who got admission posing as Brahmans were discovered on account of their speech and were thrown out. The higher studies at Takkashila consisted of the learning of the 'three Vedas by rote', other 'sacred texts', 'all the branches of knowledge', 'elephant lore' 'the science of archery', 'magic charms', 'all the liberal arts', 'all the sciences' consisting probably of Vedic ritual, grammar, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, medicine, military science, and political economy.

Similarly, the Milindapanha, a major Buddhist work of the first century AD, describes urban life more or less faithfully. 12 A

certain degree of idealization cannot be ruled out, but the creative imagination of the writer could not have been divorced from the empirical realities of the times. Seventyfive occupations are mentioned in his ideal city of Shakala (Sialkot). Some of these had no direct hand in production, like the Brahmanas and the Shramanas, or even the traders. Then there were dancers, wrestlers and acrobats, and sixteen specialized categories of fighters in the infantry and the corps of elephants, horses, and chariots. And then there were musicians, cooks, washermen, bathassistants and bawds.

However, the number of craftsmen in the city was not small. There is mention of goldsmiths and other metal-workers; workers in shell, ivory and precious or ordinary stone; makers of arms; dyers and workers in textiles; potters and builders; workers in transport; and those who prepared various kinds of sweets and other edibles. There were craftsmen who worked in gold, silver, tin, copper, brass and lead. The weavers worked in silk and wool as well cotton. Some of them specialized in making cloth for the army, the deities and the priests.

There were many other categories of people in the city. There were laundrymen, cleaners and spinners as well as tailors. There were butchers, fishmongers and sellers of grass, wood, leaves, fruits, roots, boiled and cooked rice, and cakes. The needs of urban housing, food and dress were thus adequately met. There were merchants who dealt in scents. The term used for them is ganddhi. The cloth merchants of Shakala brought silk and cotton from distant places in India. As a model city, Shakala was full of gold, silver, bronze, precious stones and coins.

IV

Over two hundred years after Fa Hian, Hiuen Tsang makes some general observations on the character of Buddhism in India.¹³ The protagonists of the Mahayana and the Hinayana lived apart. There were eighteen schools in all, each claiming pre-eminence for itself. They were at variance with one another, and 'their contending

utterances rise like the angry waves of the sea'. Hiuen Tsang indicates that the attitude of the Brahmans towards the Buddhists was hostile. The monks were governed according to the distinctive rules of each fraternity. They had three kinds of robes. Facilities given in a monastery to the monk depended upon his proficiency in Buddhist literature. At the lowest level was the one who could explain one class of literature; he was exempted from manual labour (karmadan). The monk of the highest status was the one who could explain six classes of books; he could ride an elephant and have an escort. The one who distinguished himself in a public debate by 'refined language, subtle investigation, deep penetration, and severe logic' was mounted on an elephant covered with precious ornaments, and escorted by many to the gates of the monastery.

Hiuen Tsang provides a vivid picture of the state of Buddhism from Nagarahara to Mathura. The people of Nagarahara cultivated the religion of the Buddha, and few believed in other doctrines. The monasteries were many but not the monks; the stupas were 'desolate and ruined'. To the east of the capital was a stupa said to have been built by Ashoka, commemorating the meeting of Sakya as a Bodhisattva with Dipankara Buddha, when the former covered the muddy road with his deer skin and his hair let loose for the Buddha to pass. He was assured of Buddhahood. On fast days, all sorts of flowers rained down here and excited a religious frame of mind in the people.

In the city itself there were ruins of a great stupa which at one time had contained a tooth of the Buddha. By its side was a small stupa which, it was believed, had fallen from heaven and placed itself there. To the south-west of the city was a stupa built by the people out of reverence for the spot where Tathagata had alighted for the sake of converting men. He had come from mid-India passing through the air. To the east was a stupa on the spot where Sakya as a Bodhisattva had met Dipankara Buddha and bought flowers from a girl who sold them on the condition that she should always be born as his wife. This belief provided a motif for the sculptors of the Punjab. About 6 kilometres from the city was a monastery with 'a storeyed tower' but it had no monks. In its centre was a stupa believed to have been built by Ashoka.

Close to this monastery was a waterfall, the mountain side had a great cavern regarded as the abode of the Naga Gopala. There used to be a shadow of the Buddha here in former times. 'bright as the true form, with all its characteristic marks'. Now it appeared only in a feeble likeness. 'But whoever prays with fervent faith, he is mysteriously endowed, and he sees it clearly before him, though not for long'. According to the Life of Hiuen Tsang, he prayed here fervently and saw the shadow. Hiuen Tsang relates the legend in which Gopala, a shepherd, is transformed into a great dragon to destroy the people and Tathagata takes pity on the people. By his spiritual power he comes from mid-India and the dragon accepts his precept against killing. Tathagata accepts his request to leave his shadow in the cavern. Outside the gate of the cavern of the shadow there were two square stones: on each was the impression of the foot of Tathagata. To the north-west of the cavern there was a stupa where the Buddha had walked up and down. Beside this was another stupa containing some of the hair and the nail-parings of Tathagata. In yet another stupa nearby, Tathagata had manifested the secret principles of his true doctrine. To the west of the cavern was a rock on which Tathagata had spread out his robe after washing: 'the marks of the tissue still exist'.

A stupa in the town of Hidda contained a bone relic of the Buddha, enclosed in a precious casket and placed in the middle of the stupa. People pressed a paste of scented earth on to the bone for 'lucky or unlucky presages'. Close to this stupa was another with a similar precious casket containing a similar relic. Yet another stupa contained his eyeball. It was as large as an amra fruit and 'bright and clear throughout'. There was also his sanghati robe, made of fine cotton of a yellow-red colour. Contained in another case was his sandalwood staff, with its rings of tin. These five sacred objects 'often work miracles'. The king of Kapisa had

appointed five Brahmans to offer scents and flowers to these objects. The people who wished to see the relics had to pay a gold piece. Prices were similarly fixed for the other relics. The worshippers were 'numerous' despite the heavy charges.

In Gandhara most of the people belonged to 'heretical schools' and a few believed in 'the true law'. This 'borderland of India' had produced many scholars: Narayanadeva, Asangha Bhodisattva, Vasubandhu Bodhisattva, Dharmatrata, Manorhita, and the noble Parsva. There were about a thousand monasteries in Gandhara but 'deserted and in ruins', 'filled with wild shrubs, and solitary to the last degree'. The stupas too were mostly decayed. The precious tower of the bowl (patra) of the Buddha was nothing more than the foundation. Outside the royal city there was a pīpal tree about 30 metres high. The four past Buddhas had sat under it and their 'sitting figures' were still there. It was believed that the remaining 996 Buddhas would also sit here during the Bhadra Kalpa. As foretold by Sakya Tathagata, Kanishka built a stupa to the south of this tree, over relics of the Buddha. People burnt incense and offered flowers, and paid their devotions with a sincere faith for cure in serious sickness: 'In many cases a remedy is found'. There were two figures of the Buddha, sitting cross-legged under the Bodhi tree. One of these was nearly 2 metres high. On the southern steps of the great stupa, there was a painted statue of the Buddha about 5 metres high, with two bodies from the middle upwards. Another representation of the Buddha in white stone was about 6 metres high. Different musical sounds were at times heard here. This was the work of the sages of the past who 'at times are seen, walking around the stupas'. An old monastery to the west of the great stupa was somewhat decayed. The few monks there studied the Little Vehicle (Hinayana). Many authors of Shastras had lived here and attained Arhatship. Among them was the honourable Parsvika who had embraced Buddhism at the age of eighty. To the east of his chamber was a building where Vasuhandhu prepared his Abhidharmakosha

Shastra. To the south of his house was the pavilion in which Manorhita composed his Vibhasha Shastra.

To the east of the city of Pushkalavati was a stupa believed to have been built by Ashoka. Here the four former Buddhas had preached the law. Vasumitra had composed his Abhidharma Prakarana-pada here. To the north of the city was a monastery with its halls deserted. There were very few monks, and they followed the Hinayana. Dharmatrata had composed his Samyuktabhidharma Shastra in this monastery. By its side was a stupa attributed to Ashoka. Sakya had been born in this country a thousand times as king and had given his eyes as an offering in each birth as a Bodhisattva before becoming the Buddha.

Not far from this monastery were two stupas, one believed to have been built by Brahma and the other by Indra. These structures were in ruins. About 16 kilometres to the north-west was another stupa where Tathagata had converted the mother of the demons so that she refrained from hurting people. The common folk of this country made sacrifices to her in order to obtain children. About 16 kilometres to the north of this stupa was another. where Samaka Bodhisattva had nourished his blind father and mother as a boy (Sarwan of Punjabi folklore). To the south-east of this stupa, there was another, which was associated with a prince who had given his father's great elephant in charity to Brahmans and had been banished. Close to it was a monastery with about fifty Hinayanist monks. Here Ishvara had composed a Shastra. Not far from here was another monastery with about fifty Hinayanist works. Two in this area were attributed to Ashoka. About 32 kilometres away was a monastery with a few Mahayanist monks. Here too a stupa was attributed to Ashoka. In Salatura, the birth place of Panini, there was a stupa commemorating the conversion of a disciple of Panini at the hands of an Arhat.

The people of Taxila honoured the three gems: the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. They all studied the Mahayana. About 24 kilometers to the north-west of the capital, was the tank of Nagaraja Elapatra, associated with a *bhiksh*ū who in the time of

Kashyapa Buddha had destroyed an Elaptra tree. The people of the country used to go to the side of the tank with the monks to pray for rain or for fine weather, and their prayers were answered. About 8 kilometres to the south-east of the tank, there was a stupa attributed to Ashoka. Sakya Tathagata had predicted that one of the four great gem treasures which were to appear on the appearance of Maitreya should be in this land. The spot on which stood the stupa remained perfectly still whenever there was an earthquake. But if men try to dig the earth here for the treasure, the earth shakes and they are thrown down headlong. By the side of this stupa was a monastery in ruins: there was no monk. A stupa attributed to Ashoka was about 4 kilometres to the north of the city. On feast days it glowed with light, divine flowers fell around it, and heavenly music was heard. This was the spot where Tathagata as the king of the country had cut off his head in a thousand successive births for acquiring Buddhahood. By the side of this stupa was a monastery with its courts deserted, but there were still a few monks. This was the monastery where Kumara Labdha had composed several treatises of the school of Sautrantikas.

To the south-west of Takshashila was a stupa believed to have been built by Ashoka in memory of his son Kunala who had been unjustly accused by his stepmother and blinded. 'When the blind pray to it with fervent faith, many of them recover their sight'. Hiuen Tsang relates the story of Kunala. In its broad outline it is similar to that of Puran Bhagat in the folklore of the Punjab.

To the south of the capital city of Simhapura was a stupa attributed to Ashoka. Its decorations were 'much injured'. Spiritual wonders were 'continually connected with it'. The monastery by its side was deserted and had no monks. About 15 kilometres to the south-east of the city was another stupa attributed to Ashoka. There were ten tanks and a monastery without any monk. In the monastery at Manikyala, however, there were about a hundred monks, all given to the study of the Mahayana. A stupa near this monastery commemorated the sacrifice of Mahasattva as a prince

to revive a hungry cub with his blood. 'On this account all the earth and the plants of this place are dyed with a blood colour'. Another stupa nearby was attributed to Ashoka. Spiritual 'indications' appeared here from time to time. 'Whatever sick there are who can circumambulate it are mostly restored to health'. About 16 kilometres to the east of the stupa, there was a monastery with about 200 Mahayana monks. By its side was stupa on a spot where Tathagata had restrained a wicked yaksha from eating flesh.

Not many people in the Takka country believed in the Buddha. In former times there were many charitable houses (punyasalas) in this country to provide food, clothing and medicine to the poor and to travellers. About ten monasteries were extant. The one in the capital (near the present-day Sialkot) had about a hundred Hinayana monks. Vasubandhu had composed his Paramarthasatya Shastra in this monastery. By its side was a stupa. The four past Buddhas had preached the law here; the traces of their feet could still be seen. Over a kilometre from this place was a stupa attributed to Ashoka. Tathagata had stopped here on his northward journey for propagating the Dhamma. In a great city on the eastern border of Takka (close to the present-day Labore), Hiuen Tsang stayed for a month to study the Sutras, the Shata-shastra and the Shata-shastra Vaipulayam. The author of the last work, Deva Bodhisattva, was a disciple of Nagarjuna.

In Chinapatti there were ten monasteries. The capital and the country derived its name from the fact that Kanishka had kept some Chinese hostages here. Its monastery could boast of a scholar like Vinitaprabha who had mastered the three Pitakas and composed a commentary on the Panchas-khanda Shastra and the Vidyamitra Siddhitridasha Shastra. Hiuen Tsang stayed here for more than a year to study the Abhidharma Shastra, the Abhidharma-prakarna-sasana Shastra, and the Nyayadvara-taraka Shastra, among others. Presumably in the kingdom of Chinapatti, the monastery of Tamasavana (the dark forest) had about 300 monks of conspicuous virtue and pure life'. They were deeply versed in Hinayana, and studied the doctrine of the Sarvastivada school.

'The 1000 Buddhas of the Bhadarakaepa will explain, in this country, to the assembly of the Devas the principle of the excellent law'. This was the monastery in which the master of Shashtras, Katyayana, had composed his Abhidharmajnana-prasthana Shastra. A stupa was attributed to Ashoka. By its side were the traces of the four past Buddhas, where they sat and walked. Many arhats had attained to nirvāṇa here. 'There teeth and bones still remain'.

In Jalandhar, there were about fifty monasteries, with about 2,000 monks. They studied both the Mahayana and the Hinayana. Udhita, the king of this country, met an Arhat and heard the law and was converted to Buddhism, Formerly, he had shown greatly partiality to the heretics, but now he built a number of monasteries and stupas throughout 'the five Indies' wherever there were traces of the Buddha. He showed open respect for the virtuous and reputable monks and punished the disorderly ones. In the Nagaradhana monastery of the royal city of Jalandhar there was Chandraverma who was thoroughly acquainted with the *Tripitaka*. Hiuen Tsang stayed here for four months to study the *Prakarana-vibhasha Shastra*.

In Kulu there were about twenty monasteries and about 1,000 Mahayanist monks. There were only a few followers of the other schools (nikayas). Tathagata was believed to have come to this country 'to preach the law and to save men'. A stupa in the middle of the country, attributed to Ashoka, was meant to commemorate Tathagata's visit.

The people of the Satudra sincerely believed in the law of the Buddha and showed great respect for it. Within and outside the capital city (near the presently-day Sirhind) were ten monasteries; the halls were now 'deserted and cold', and there were but few monks. Over a kilometre from the city there was a stupa attributed to Ashoka, 'where the four past Buddhas sat or walked'.

In Thanesar, there were three monasteries and about 700 monks who studied the Hinayana. Over a kilometre to the northwest of the city was a stupa attributed to Ashoka. Brilliant light

was frequently emitted form it and 'many spiritual prodigies' were exhibited.

In Srughna (Sugh), there were five monasteries, with about 1,000 monks. Most of them studied the Hinayana. They had the reputation of being learned and polite in debates and discourses. Men from different regions came here to get their doubts clarified. Close to the capital city there was a monastery and a stupa, attributed to Ashoka, to mark the place where Tathagata preached the law. In another stupa nearby there were hair and nails. Around this were the stupas of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana, and a large number of other Arhats. Jayagupta, a monk of this kingdom, was renowned by his study of the *Tripitaka*. Hiuen Tsang stayed here 'one winter and half of the spring season' to study the Vibhasha according to the school of Sautrantikas.

In Mathura there were about twenty monasteries with 2,000 monks. They studied equally the Mahayana and the Hinayana. Three stupas were attributed to Ashoka. There were 'very many traces' of the four past Buddhas. There were stupas of the holy followers of Tathagata: Sariputra, Mudgalaputra, Purnamaitrayaniputra, Upali, Ananda, Rahula, and Manjushri. Every year during the months in which long fasts were observed, and during the six fast days of each month, the monks went there with offerings. Those who studied the Abhidharma honoured Sariputra; those who practised meditation honoured Mudgalaputra; those who recited the Sutras honoured Purnamaitrayaniputra; those who studies the Vinaya did reverence to Upali; the bhikshunīs honoured Ananda; the young novices who were not yet fully ordained honoured Rahula; and those who studied the Mahayana did reverence to the Bodhisattyas. The king of the country and his ministers applied themselves to these religious duties with zeal. Jewelled banners spread out, rich parasols were displayed, the smoke of incense rose to the clouds, and flowers were scattered in every direction; the sun and the moon were concealed as by cloud hanging over the moist valley.

The picture of Buddhism that emerges from this evidence shows the existence of a large number of monasteries and stupas

in the Punjab. Many of them were associated with the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and Ashoka. They presented a beautiful spectacle, but many of them were either totally abandoned or on the decline. The number of the monks was decreasing. Several rulers were still well disposed towards Buddhism but only Harsha and Udhita were keen to promote it. Like the great Buddhist structures, great Buddhist works had been produced in the past, and there were still some well known scholars in some of the monasteries. Their creativity, however, was confined to commentaries. It is not insignificant that Hiuen Tsang stayed in the Punjab for over three years to study various branches of Buddhist literature. Relatively speaking, the Mahayana was dominant in the Doabs and the Hinayana in the Sutlej-Jamuna Divide. Three Buddhas had appeared in the universe before Sakya, and 996 more were to come. Each Buddhahood was the culmination of a large number of lives of Buddhisattvahood and this process was to continue for a number of a cosmic cycles (kalpas). The supreme aim of life was to attain to nirvāņa and thereby to end the transmigratory cycle, the source of sorrow and suffering. Meditation and asceticism were believed to lead one along the right path. Emphasis was laid on compassion and non-injury to living beings. Buddhist ritual was marked by the worship of idols and sacred relics by incantations, burning of incense, and offering precious articles as well as flowers. At places, rates were fixed for the earning of different degrees of religious merit. Belief in the supranatural was common. Prayers were believed to affect the behaviour of nature. Boons could result from ritual, and the sick could be healed. Brahmanical gods like Indra and Brahma were introduced to the Buddhist world of the devas, and male and female demons were yoked to the cause of Buddhism.

Just as Ashoka and Kanishka were looked upon as the promoters of Buddhism in the past, Mihirakula was seen as its destroyer. According to Hiuen Tsang, Mihirakula was offended by the indifference of certain monks to his inclination towards Buddhism. He issued an edict to destroy all the monks throughout

'the five Indies', to overthrow the law of the Buddha, and to leave nothing remaining. He destroyed 1,600 stupas and monasteries in Gandhara alone. Thousands of people were slain or enslaved. Mihirakula withered away at last like a falling leaf.

It may be added that modern scholars hold different views on the destructive role of the Hunas. Marshall attributes the destruction of monasteries at Taxila to the predecessors of Toramana and Mihirakula. Dani discounts destruction at the hands of the Epthalites.¹⁴

V

Tantric elements began to enter Buddhism in the eighth century. Dharnis, though only a part of the Mahayana Sutras, became increasingly important. The ritual of the worship of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas was elaborated, including repetition of mantras on days regarded as auspicious throughout the year. Tara came to be associated with Avalokiteshvara. In Tantric Buddhism, known as Vajrayana, Truth came to be equated with the phenomenal world and with the Buddha. Great importance was attached to mantras, and directions were formulated for drawing pictures of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Tara and other deities; rites and ceremonies of worship were elaborated. There were two schools of Vajrayana: the Madhyamika and the Yogachara. In the latter, mudras, mandalas, mantras, yoga and hathayoga became-increasingly important. Tara came to be treated as the Shakti of the Adi Buddha. The ritual of eating meat and indulging in sexual intercourse became a feature of Tantric Buddhism. 15

There is no doubt that state patronage or persecution could affect the fortunes of Buddhism, but state policy alone would account neither for its earlier popularity nor for its late disappearance. No rulers seem to have tried to promote Buddhism after Harsha and Udhita, and no guilds of traders or artisans appear to have been associated with monasteries. Divided among themselves, the monks were compromising with popular beliefs and practices or turning monasteries into ivory towers. The

exponents of other faiths, especially the Brahmans, appear to have become more active. As an outpost of the Hindu Shahis, Taxila shows no signs of Buddhism. Survivals of Buddhism in the Sutlej-Jamuna Divide are indicated by a bronze image of the Buddha from Hansi, and a few sandstone heads of the Buddha from the districts of Ambala and Rohtak, ascribed to the ninth and tenth centuries. Buddhism had virtually disappeared from the Punjab by the end of the first millennium. Alberuni, who was seriously interested in Buddhism, and wanted to know more about it, was unable to find any Buddhist scholar or a Buddhist work in the Punjab.¹⁶

The general impression that we get from the foregoing pages is that Buddhism was widely prevalent in the Punjab for about a thousand years. The Mahayana form which lent a certain measure of popularity to Buddhism not only in the Punjab but also outside the Punjab could well have arisen in this region. In any case, Buddhism yielded place to Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism which became the dominant systems of religious belief and practice before the advent of Islam and remained important during the medieval period. Buddhism vanished from the Punjab but left many traces and legacies behind.

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2

SANT KABIR

The importance and the difficulty in studying Kabir have been underlined in recent scholarship. More than seventy works have been attributed to him, and even for the earliest collection the door was kept open to alterations, interpolations, and additions by an oral transmission of over a century.² By far the most revered collection of Kabir's verses by the Kabir-Panthis is the Bījak, the last book in the Khās Granth said to have been preserved in the Kabir Chaura Math at Benares. Even the shorter version of the Bījak cannot be accepted as entirely genuine. Apart from a number of meaningless and obviously corrupt verses, it contains numerous references to the elaborate cosmogony and religious beliefs peculiar to the sectarian Kabir-Panthis. The compositions of Kabir in the Gurū Granth Sahib are free from the Kabir-Panthi sectarian element which imbues the Bījak, and its authenticity is better established. Nevertheless, some of the verses included in this collection have a hagiological character. Allusions to the mythical bhaktas of yore do not fit in with Kabir's rejection of Brahmanical scriptures and Hindu lore. The Panch-Vāņī literature composed by the Dadu-Panthis in Rajasthan appears to be a little less authentic than the Punjab tradition. On the whole, thus, there remains a lingering uncertainty about 'the relative value and degree of authenticity to be accorded to any given verse'.3

A number of sākhīs and padas are common to all the three traditions, that is, the Bījak, the Gurū Granth and the Kabir-Granthāvalī based on the Rajasthan tradition. We propose to take up the common core of the three traditions for the ideas

and attitudes of Kabir before turning to the Bījak and the Gurū Granth. The question of Kabir-Panthis would be taken up at the end.

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At least a dozen of shaloks (sākhīs) in the Gurū Granth are found in the Bījak and the Kabir-Granthāvalī. One of these refers to God (Har) as the diamond and to his men as the jewellers who adorn their shops with the diamond; they offer their wares only when they meet a genuine purchaser. Another shalok refers to Brahm-giān which stills the mind; the fire that burns the world is like water for the men of God. The fire that burns is māyā; but worse than māyā is pride. What does it matter, says Kabir, if you have abandoned māyā but not pride? Many great sages (munīs) have been swallowed by pride. Equally harmful is evil company: it is like the thorny ber tree which tears up the leaves of the adjoining banana whenever it swings. Kabir is sad to see the world burning like a corpse: the bones burn like wood, and the hair like grass. Fire can burn again and again: the half-burnt wood of the forest is afraid that it would burn again when the blacksmith (lohār) takes it home as firewood. Human life without Brahm-giān remains incessantly on fire.5

The worldly preceptors cannot help in this predicament. They advise others with mouths wide open to receive dust; they profess to save the capital of others but eat up even their own crop. The Brahman is the gurū of the world, says Kabir; but not of the bhaktas; entangled in the four Vedas he has himself suffered death. The crowd follows the easy way in which the pandits have have gone; Kabir follows the uphill path of Ram. Human life provides a rare opportunity, says Kabir; it does not come again: the ripe fruit fallen from the tree does not join the branch again. The world dies again and again, no one knows how to die; one should die such a death that one does not die again. Dying to oneself to subsist in God is 'real death' which at the same time is life eternal. The realization of this truth brings in the pangs of

separation. When the snake of separation (birhu) enters the mind it heeds no mantar; he who is separated from Ram does not live, and if he lives he becomes demented.⁶

In these shaloks (sākhīs) we find some of the basic ideas of Kabir: concern with God and Brahm-giān; dying unto self to subsist in God; māyā as the snare, and pride as an impediment to liberation from transmigration; denunciation of evil company and rejection of the Brahmanical way; emphasis on human life as a rare opportunity for liberation; and the awareness of separation as a prelude to union.

In the common padas, Kabir's God is the Painter, the Weaver, and the thug. The stars in sky bear witness to his art; the sun and the moon bear witness to his light in the entire universe. However, only the fortunate ones can know and understand, only they who have Ram in their hearts and on their lips. No one knows the secret of the Weaver whose network is spread over the world. The earth and the sky are his workshop; the sun and the moon, his shuttles. Kabir's mind is inclined towards that Weaver whose power keeps the universe going. The weaver Kabir has recognized Ram within himself. He has demolished his own workshop and joined his thread with the thread of the great weaver. God (Har) is a great thug who deceives the whole world: whose son and whose father, who dies and who is to be blamed? Whose wife and whose husband? Reflect on the reality of physical frame. It is perishable, but there is an element in the human body that does not die. Kabir's mind in inclined towards the thug. Once 'deception' is recognized for what it is, there is no deception. God is recognized in and behind the universe.7

Using metaphors and similes from weaving, Kabir talks of the human frame, its needs, and its perishability to hammer the point that human beings should concentrate on God instead of remaining entangled in earthly pursuits. As the honey-bee collects honey bit by bit, so men collect wealth. When they die, their corpses are hurriedly carried away. The wife goes upto the door, and the friends and the kith and kin go up to the cremation ground, and then the soul is alone. The living beings are subject to death but they remain imprisoned in the false māyā like the parrot in the cage. What is there in the body and the wealth to be proud of? The crows are pecking at the head which was adorned once with the turban. This will be your state if you do not take to Ram's name, says Kabir. Immersed in the thirst for sensual delights and indulging in sexual pleasure and pride, men do not find the way to the only desirable state; their eyes do not see as if blinded, and they are drowned without water. Your body is all skin and bone and dirt; it is full of bad odour; why do you strut in pride? Death is not far from you; the body which you preserve with much care does not last long; you live under illusion and do not remember Ram. One cannot do anything by oneself; if he desires, one may meet the True Guru and recite the Name. You are pampering your body, living in a house of sand; without the remembrance of Ram. many a sage has sunk. Men are awakened only when death strikes.8

The Brahman and his ways cannot lead to liberation. He has forgotten the One who, according to him, uttered the Veda and the Gayatri. He does not turn to God (Har) who is the refuge of the whole world. He does not utter 'Ram' and goes to hell. He regards himself high but eats from the homes of the low, performing rituals for them. He begs shamelessly on 'the fourteenth' and the amāvas; with a lamp in his hand he falls into the well. How can the julāhā of Kashi be equated with the Brahman? Kabir has been saved by the uttering the name of Ram; the pandit has drowned because of his reliance on the Vedas. If the Pandit is intoxicated with the Purāṇa, the Jogī is inebriated with meditation and the Sanynsī with pride. They are not awake and thieves have entered their homes to steal. Only the devotees of God become awake, like Sukdeo, Akrur, Hanuvant and Shankar in the ages past, and Nama and Jaidev in the Kali Age. There are many states of sleep and wakefulness. Pre-eminent among the awake are they who turn to the Guru (Gurmukh).9

The Turks are no better than the Hindus. If Allah resides in the mosque, who is in the rest of the country? The Hindus believe that God is in the idols. None of the two has grasped the essence. Kabir lives by the name of Allah-Ram and prays for his mercy. Hari lives in the South and Allah in the West, they say; but search him in the heart of hearts; there he is. The Brahman keeps fast on 24 ekādasī days and the Qāzī in the month of Ramzān; they are not bothered about God for the remaining eleven months of the year. Pilgrimage to Puri and prayer in the mosque are of no avail. All men and women are created by God; they are his forms. Kabir is the child of Allah-Ram, and all are his gurus and pīrs. 'Listen to me, you men and women, says Kabir: take refuge in the one. Recite only the Name so that you may swim'. 10

Where have Hindus and Turks come from? Who has started the two ways? Who are headed for heaven and who for hell? Which books have you read O qāzī? Many others have read, but all have died without knowing the secret. Circumcision for the love of women is not a convincing argument. Had God wished men to become Turks he would have sent them circumcised. And what about women? If circumcision makes men Turks, what should be done with women? Since they live with women, do they remain Hindu? Leave the books, you fool, and remember Ram; you are oppressing people. Kabir has taken refuge in Ram, and the Turks remain in despair. The common aim of life for all mankind is union with the spouse. Water does not stay in a pot of clay. The body crumbles when the soul leaves it. The unwed virgin adorns herself in vain; she cannot enjoy union without a husband. The whole life is a waste if it is spent in waiting. The night has gone in heedlessness and the day might go. The soul-woman trembles to think how the spouse would treat her.11

Kabir makes his preference for the devotees of God quite clear. There is no point in talking to a fool. It can lead only to disputation and wrangling. It is better to remain absorbed in Ram. There is merit and benefit in speaking to a sant. The empty vessel makes much noise; the one that is full does not. Kabir wants to know from Ram whether mind is greater or the one through whom one comes to know of Ram, whether Brahma is greater or his

creator, whether the *Veda* is greater or the source from which it came, whether the devotee of God is greater or the place of pilgrimage. ¹² Nothing other than God is of any consequence to a true devotee of God.

In these padas, the unity of God is emphasized; He is the creator of the universe; He is in the microcosm as much as in the macrocosm. He is also the creator of māyā which lures human beings to earthly pursuits, sensual pleasure and pride, and which keeps them bound to the chain of transmigration. Kabir does not identify himself with any of the existing systems of religious belief and practice. In fact, he is critical of the representatives of Islam and 'Hinduism': their scriptures, their beliefs, and their practices. In his view, there could be only one way to liberation, and that was his own path: complete dedication to God alone. The multiplicity of epithets used for God does not create any confusion about His Oneness, and it does not suggest any 'sectarian' association. Ram and Allah are the same; Har and Hari are the same; but Brahma is not Kabir's God. The Chītanhār, Thug, Kori, Piya and Bhatara refer to the same God. He is also the True Guru (satgur). To turn to Him is to be Gurmukh. Another term used for the true devotee of God is sant. God is also equated with the Name (nām, Rām-nām). Quite explicity, Kabir addresses himself to both men and women.

Ш

In the Bijak of Kabir there is great emphasis on ahimsa. The Brahman is a slicked-down butcher. He slaughters a goat and rushes for a buffalo without a twinge of pain in his heart. He lounges after his bath, slaps sandal paste on his brow, does a song and dance for the Goddess, crushes souls in the wink of an eye. The river of blood flows on from day to day. He is a phony Brahman. He tells tales about ending sin but his own actions are sinful. Kabir tells the Brahman that beast-meat and and man-meat are the same; both have blood that is red. 'You eat animals and fish as if they grew like grass'. The living beast is slaughtered for

'gods and goddesses of clay'. The things men eat to please their tongues come back to eat the men.¹³

The Brahman is not alone. There is the slaughterer of cows too. He is a moron and mindless fool who does not know that Ram is in every breath. He rampages in, knocks down a cow, cuts its throat to take its life. He turns a living soul into a corpse and calls it a holy rite. He says the meat is pure. 'Meat is born of blood and sperm, that's your holy dinner'. The blood he sheds is on his head, a sin. A darvesh is no different from a mullā if he approves of the killing of animals. God who created them could not approve of going from house to house for chopping heads. 'Who gave the order for chickens and goats? Who told you to swinge the knife?' To fast all day and kill cows at night-here prayers, there blood-does not please God.¹⁴

Kabir makes an appeal for kindness to living beings. 'Without living beings, beings can't live. Life is the basis of life. Be kind to beings, take care of them'. Do not murder a poor creature; we all share one breath. One may read a thousand *Purāṇas* but the sin of killing a living being would not be washed. One may make pilgrimage and give a million jewels to gods, one would not be saved. 'Don't murder a poor creature, he'll pay you back the same'. To kill a living being is to die a spiritual death.¹⁵

Kabir castigates the Brahman and the Mullā for their mutual wrangling too. They are lost in schisms. One talks of Ram, Keshav, and Hari and the other of Allah, Karīm, and Hazrat. One insists on $p\bar{u}j\bar{a}$, the other on $nam\bar{a}z$. One talks of Mahadev and Brahma, the other of Muhammad and Adam. One speaks of the *Vedas*, the other of the $Qur'\bar{a}n$. Hindus say 'burn my body'. Turks say 'follow my Pir'. They fight religious wars. They do not realize that there cannot be two gods. Gold cannot have a double nature, whatever the shape of the ornament made from it. The Mullās and Brahmans give so many names to human beings, this a Hindu that a Turk, but 'the pots are all one clay'. The Kali Age's crafty $gur\bar{u}s$ entice the world to destroy it. The Veda and the $Qur'\bar{a}n$ are traps laid for poor souls to tumble in. The Brahman and the $Q\bar{a}z\bar{1}$ force their

way on others, but without Ram's refuge they would leave the world crying.¹⁶

The yogīs are equally deluded. The posturing yogīs are hypocrites; their hearts are crammed with pride; they pray to brass and stones, and reel with pride in their pilgrimage; they fix their caps and their prayer-beads, paint their brow-marks and armmarks, and bray their hymns and their couplets. They never heard of a soul. The yogī says "yoga's the top, don't talk of seconds'. But who has gotten anywhere with tuft of hair shaven, matted locks, and vow of silence? Gorakh could not keep his breath though he knew some yogic tricks. He could not go beyond power, profit and control. Gorakh was yoga's connoisseur, and his body was not cremated; still his meat rotted and mixed with dust; he polished his body for nothing. The yogī has gone away but no one knows where. His rags are burnt, his flag torn, his stick snapped, his bowl cracked. They want emptiness and go to emptiness; they let go of hands and are left handless.¹⁷

Kabir's conception of God leaves no room for the idea of incarnation. What comes and goes is māyā; the guardian knows no time; he does not go anywhere and does not come. The 'beloved' could not become a turtle or a fish; he could not go about killing goblins. He is kind and knows no rancour; he does not kill. Do not call him a boar; he never held this heavy world. Everyone believed in the fellow who burst from a pillar; but he whose claws ripped out the King's belly is not the maker. The dwarf-shape did not test Bali; the tester was māyā. Parashuram never slew any princes; māyā pulled that trick. The creator did not marry Sita; he did not tie up the sea with stones. They who pray to Raghunath as the one are praying in the dark. He did not come to Gokul with cowherds and milkmaids; the maker never killed Kansa. He is gracious, everyone's lord; he does not conquer, does not defeat. The master was not Buddha, and he would not become Kalki. Māyā set up all these traps to drive the pure ones from their paths. Only 'second things' bloom and blow, not the First. 18

The concept of māyā figures prominently in the Bījak. Just one man and just one woman, and all the eightyfour lacs of forms of life in one egg a whole universe is lost in delusion. Just one woman has spread her net, and the world is filled with confusion. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva searched for the one man but could not find him. No one can lay a hand on the woman without the sword of knowledge. Only they become free from her whom the gurū awakes. Māyā is not independent of God: 'one born a man became a woman'. The creator gave us a cow; she is horribly heavy; she takes in water through nine holes but her thirst is not quenched. Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and Sanaka searched, joined by countless adepts in the hunt, but no one could find the cow. Māyā is the super swindler; she whispers honeyed words, trailing the noose of three qualities. She is Lakshmi for Vishnu; she is Shakti for Shiva; an idol for priests; a river for pilgrims; a nun for a monk; a queen to a king; a jewel in one house, and a shell in another; she is a pious lady for devotees, and for Brahma his consort. Māyā is delusion. The dog goes running into the lookingglass cavern; seeing his own reflection he dies barking. Māyā permeates mind; the three worlds whirl in doubt. Delusion fills the three worlds. It is everywhere. People live in Delusion Village.19

Māyā permeates the mind and grips the senses. Five fellows and a woman are at each other's throat day and night. Everyone wants a different diet and the five have big appetites. The world burns in māyā's flames for gold and sex. The mind is a mad killer-elephant; its desires are hawks. They swoop and eat at will and cannot be stopped. The mind, King Elephant, does not obey, and it goes where lust takes it. 'What can the poor driver do without even a goad in his hand?'. Māyā is a female scavenger and a scavenger-man is her husband. She mixes up son and father and runs from both when she can. The mind is greedy for its own juice, and splashes in sensual waves. The body is a ship and the mind is a crow that flies a million miles. Gold, silk, horses, women, and a lot of wealth last a little time. When the terror of Death comes, the man's face shrivels. Cheated, he learns that his nectar

was poison. The only trick that does not lead you to a trap is the Ram-knowing trick but the world sticks to its own tricks and does not listen to Kabir.²⁰

The way out of the delusion of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ is to recognize God. The trickster Hari roves through the world, pulling tricks and saying nothing. Kabir has understood Hari's magic play. Beating his drum he rolls out the show, and then gathers it in again. The great Hari dupes gods, men and sages. When he brings out the sorceress $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, she baffles everyone and truth cannot enter the heart. It is clear to the wise that the magic is false but the magician is true. The way to end sorrow is to break your engagement with lies. The $B\bar{i}jak$ tells of a hidden treasure. The word tells of a creator.²¹

Kabir tells the pandit of a state in which there was only one reality. There was no creator or creation there, no gross or fine, no wind or fire, no sun, moon, earth or water, no radiant form, no time, no word, no flesh, no faith, no cause and effect, nor any thought of the Veda. No Hari or Brahma, no Shiva or Shakti, no pilgrimage and no rituals; no mother, father or gurū there. The unique Reality has no form, no second. At first, there was no Om or Veda, no starry sky, no moon or sun, no sea or land; 'who can name him or know his command?' There was no night or day. He has no ancestry, no race or family. He is based on nothing. 'Of that sourceless state, what to say? No town nowhere to stay; seen without a trace; what do you call that place?' Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva died, Parvati's son Ganesha died, Hanuman the bridgebuilder died, Krishna died, the maker died. 'One, the Original, didn't die'. For him there is no fall, no rise; that one never dies. He is referred to as the Weaver, the Musician, the Potter, and the Sūtardhār. People believed that Brahma was given the universe, Vishnu was put in charge of the three worlds, and then Shankar with his lingam nailed the earth to the seventh hell. Next came the eight-armed lady to bring the three worlds under her spell. She was called Parvati too, who got Shiva by austerity. For Kabir, there is God, and there is māyā: 'just one man, just one woman.

From them the four life-forms, four castes, three qualities, earth and sky'.22

The characteristic epithet used for God by Kabir is Ram whose name is all-efficacious. The one without stain (Niranjan) is in all bodies. Without Ram's name, the worlds disappear into dying worlds. Keep remembering Ram, his indestructible name. Get attached to Ram's name and learn 'how the insect gives its heart to the bee'. Ram's name is not mere repetition. 'If saying Ram gave liberation, saying candy made your mouth sweet, saying fire burned your feet, saying water quenched your thirst, saying food banished hunger, the whole world would be free'. One name is the cure for death. Know Ram's name to be your own, throw away unreal things. Ram's pass is a high one. Kabir keeps climbing. His house is at the top of a narrow, slippery track. An ant's foot would not fit. He who recognizes Ram's name, the bars of his cage grow thin. Sleep does not come to his eyes, meat does not jell on his limbs.²³

Kabir talks of love that intoxicates like liquor and burns like fire. Put on the gown of love-silk, and dance. Kabir talks of separation and meeting. When the arrow of separation hits there is no healing. Sobbing and sobbing, you live dying, and rise groaning. 'She went with her husband to the in-laws' house but didn't sleep with him, didn't enjoy him. Her youth slipped away like a dream'. One meets Ram through the gurū's grace. 'A touch of grace from the gurū, the invisible, markless appeared. Simple meditation, absolute stillness awakened. Simply I met Ram'. The mystery is found by a rare one: the proof is the gurū's word. God is the True Guru.²⁴

Kabir's message is universal. The world was stupefied with its cliques and caucuses. Be non-partisan, worship Hari, join the good and wise. 'One kills with a chop, one lets the blood drop, in both houses burns the same fire. Turks and Hindus have one way, the gurū has made it clear. Don't say Ram, don't say Khuda. So says Kabir'. Kabir's path is open to the low castes and the outcastes. He has several verses addressed to the pandit about

untouchability. 'Pandit, look in your heart for knowledge. Tell me where untouchability came from, since you believe in it'. Each human being is formed alike and comes into the world as soon as it is ready. 'Then what's untouchable?'. Eightyfour hundred thousand vessels decay into dust while the potter keeps slapping clay on the wheel, and with a touch cuts each one off. 'We eat by touching, we wash by touching, from a touch the world was born. So who's untouched? asks Kabir. Only he who has no taint of Māyā'.²⁵

Untouchability and purity are man-made of course. In fact, they are Brahman-made. 'Pandit think before you drink that water'. Hell flows along the river, with rotten men and beasts. 'Trickling through bones, melting through flesh - where does milk come from? That's what you drink after lunch, pandit. And you call clay untouchable?' These are fantasies of the pandit's mind. Human frame is all one skin and bone, one piss and shit, one blood, one meat. 'From one drop a universe. Who's Brahmin? Who's Shudra?'. Plunge into Ram: there is no Hindu, no Turk. The Pandit splashes himself if he touches somebody. But who could be lower than him who is proud of his quality, and great with authority. Such pride never does anyone good. 'He whose name is pridebreaker - how will he tolerate pride like yours?'. Family and status are a hindrance to the state of liberation (pad-nirvān). 'Kabir says, he lives from age to age who drops his family, caste and race'. 'Without knowing the gurū all four castes are untouchable'.26

Kabir juxtaposes the satī with a whore to underscore single-minded dedication to God. 'She belonged to one, then to many: a whore has plenty of husbands. Kabir says, who'll she burn with, everyone's woman?'. The metaphor appears to appreciate the satī. There is also the metaphor of a female devotee of God. 'The lonely woman waves wicks - Let me see you Ram! If you show up after I die, what's the use?'. 'Z' Kabir's path could be open to women as well as to the Shudra and the untouchable. However, his concern appears to be soteriological rather than social. Kabir of the Bījak does not appear to contest deprivation

of women. He is a 'revolutionary' to the extent that his message of personal liberation is universal.

However, everyone did not accept or understand Kabir's message. He goes on shouting, perched on a sandalwood tree. He shows the road but people do not take it. They strain their brains but do not understand. Kabir wandered through alleys, from village to village, at home and abroad, but never met a fellow who could winnow. He recited couplets every day right on time, but 'the dead do not come back, no, they do not turn around'. What can the poor $gur\bar{u}$ do if the student is a lout?' The main reason of course is the high price demanded for the word. That is why there are no buyers. Kabir's $s\bar{a}kh\bar{t}$ is wisdom's eye. Without the $s\bar{a}kh\bar{t}$, the struggles of the world would never end.²⁸

Kabir tries to make people aware of the real purpose of human life to free them from the rut into which they have fallen. Monks and yogīs give up their pedigrees but still brag of their lineage. Heaven and hell are for the ignorant, not for those who know Hari. When you die what do you do with your body? Hindus prefer cremation, Turks burial. But in the end, one way or another, both have to leave home. Death spreads its net like a fisherman snaring fish. You will be sorry when you go from this house to that one.²⁹

The self forgets itself as a frantic dog in a glass temple barks himself to death; as a lion, seeing a form in the well, leaps on the image; as a rutting elephant sticks his tusk in a crystal boulder. The monkey has his fistful of sweets and would not let go. So from house to house he gibbers. 'Kabir says, parrot-on-apole: who has caught you?' Make your own decision. See for yourself while you live. Find your own place. What house will you have when you are dead? 'Creature, you don't see your opportunity. In the end no one belongs to you'. Why waste the precious life through greed? You took rebirth because of your deeds, and because of your deeds you'll be born again after death. The cycle will go on if you waste the opportunity.³⁰

Crookedness, deception and vanity are as great moral flaws as sensual indulgence. For the sake of wife, son, house, job and power, men take the load like the oilman's bullock. 'It was you who left your lord to soak in the senses, you who sowed the seed of sin'. Through eightyfour hundred thousand incarnations the sea rolls. 'Kabir says, you're holding on to a dog's tail'. People babble of alms and merit but do not hear news of their death. Like fish with worm, mouse with chameleon, snake with poisonous mole, each one gives up his soul. Some of the sākhīs of Kabir make terse statements on the themes we have touched upon.³¹

There are no sacred or accursed places for Kabir. The Maithili Pandit said to him that Magahar was a terrible place to die in. 'If you want Ram to take you away, die somewhere else instead'. Kabir says if you give up the ghost in Kashi would there be any debt on the Lord's part? 'So much for your faith in Ram. What's Kashi? Magahar? Barren ground, when Ram rules in your heart'. This verse is taken to be autobiographical, suggesting Kabir's stay at Magahar towards the end of his life. Probably it is. However, the point made by Kabir is quite clear: all places are alike to a person who is dedicated to God.

In the $B\bar{\imath}jak$, on the whole, there is greater emphasis on ahimsa and on the wrangling between Brahmans and Mullas as the self-styled representatives of Hindus and Muslims. They are both misled, and they mislead others. Bracketed with them in this respect are the $yog\bar{\imath}s$. The idea of incarnation by God is totally rejected. No sanctity is attached even to places regarded as the most sacred. $M\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ appears very prominently in the $B\bar{\imath}jak$. It is God's creation but almost as important as God. Some of the verses appear to refer to monistic Reality rather than a personal God. The emphasis on knowledge $(gi\bar{a}n)$ is greater than on union or separation, or on ethical conduct. There is appreciation for $sat\bar{\imath}$. The message of the $B\bar{\imath}jak$ is universal, meant for both Hindus and Muslims, the high and the low, the Brahman and the untouchable.

IV

Charlotte Vaudeville thinks that the authenticity of the Ādi Granth tradition is 'the best established' of all the three traditions of Kabir. 33 According to David Lorenzen, however, all the three major collections of Kabir 'contain interpolations of material from other sources'. 34

A number of verses in the $\bar{A}di$ Granth tradition are related to the life of Kabir. These 'biographical' verses are not devoid of significance for the life of Kabir. Probably he lived at Magahar and had a critical spiritual experience before he moved to Benares. His occupation in Benares was weaving, and he believed that his family belonged to the $j\bar{a}ti$ of Julāhās. With his increasing association with $s\bar{a}dhs$ and sants he began to neglect his craft. His mother and wife were unhappy with this situation. Some other people at Benares were unhapy with Kabir, presumably because of his views and attitudes. Looking at Kabir's activity as culturally and socially subversive, possibly they sought intervention by local authorities. Kabir probably had a daughter and one or more sons, none of whom was capable of carrying his legacy further. In advanced age he moved to Magahar with the idea of spending the rest of his life there.³⁵

Though extremely valuable, this biographical information was not the real concern of Kabir in these verses. Each verse was meant to convey a message: the unity of God, his power and grace; the presence of God within man; the uselessness of external observances; the importance of *bhoā-bhaktī* in earning spiritual merit leading to emancipation through union with God; the irrelevance of learning for liberation; the irrelevance of high or low caste for attaining to emancipation; the importance of the *Gurū* and the Name in the system conceived by Kabir; total indifference to conventional piety; respect and consideration for the Sants who were selflessly devoted to God and who enjoyed God's protection.

Kabir addresses himself to 'Hindus' and 'Turks', sometimes together. He associates the Turk with tarīqat (the path of the

mystics of Islam) and the Hindu with the Veda and the Purāṇa. The Hindus have died worshipping idols and the Turks have died rubbing their heads in prayer; the former cremate the dead and the latter place them in graves; all die without knowing God. 'Without the Name of God, says Kabir, no one can attain liberation'. Both the Hindu and the Turk should sing the praises of God. Kabir has left both the pandit and the mullā; he has accepted nothing from what the pandit and the mullā have written. For him, the human man is Mecca and the human body is qiblah; the Guru speaks through them. The mullā should give the call to prayer in this mosque of twelve doors. He should discard anger, sin and illusion; he should control his five senses to acquire patience (sabūrī). The master of the Hindus and the Turks is the same. The Mullā and the Shaikh should try to attain the state of bliss, like Kabir.³⁶

Just as the Turk and the Hindu are bracketed by Kabir in some of his verses so are the Veda and the Qur'an. He proclaims that his thought (bīchār) is different from what one finds in the Vedas or the Semitic books. They are false (iftira) because they do not remove the anxiety of the heart. People read falsehood (darogh) and feel satisfied. One can see the presence of God everywhere by putting on the spectacles of faqr. 'Allah is the purest of the pure and there is no other. Mercy belongs to him and only he knows when he bestows his grace on someone'. If you say that God is in everything why do you kill a fowl? The mullā talks of divine justice but so long as he carries deceit in his heart his ablution and prayer in the mosque and his pilgrimage to the Ka'bah are meaningless. He is impure; he has failed to know God who is pure. He has missed paradise; he is bound for hell. Allah first created the light $(n\bar{u}r)$, and the same light is in everyone; they are all alike. Have no doubt that the whole creation is in God and God is in the whole creation: there is no place where he is not. The clay is the same but the forms given to it by the creator are different; there is no fault in any pot and there is no fault in the potter. The same true one is in everyone and behind all that

happens. He who recognizes God's hukam recognizes him and becomes his slave (bandā). Allah cannot be fully known, but he is the sweet candy (gur) which the Gurū has given. 'My doubt has vanished, says Kabir, and I have seen the Attributeless One' (niranjan).³⁷

Kabir asks the *mullā* 'why do you climb the minaret?' God is not deaf. He whom you call aloud is in the heart. The Shaikh has no patience (sabr); he goes to the Ka'bah for pilgrimage (hajj); his heart is not steadfast, how can he find God? Anything imposed by force is oppression, how can it be called legitimate (halāl)? He would receive punishment when the account of his deeds is taken. Kabir was going to the Ka'bah for pilgrimage (hajj) and God asked him in annoyance 'who ordered you to go?' Kabir has been to the Ka'bah many a time but the pīr has never spoken to him.³⁸

Reference to Islamic beliefs and practices are more elaborate in the *shabads* than in the *shaloks*. Access to God is not easy. His court is far away and he is surrounded by seven thousand $\bar{s}l\bar{a}rs$, 1 lakh and a quarter of prophets, 88 crores of Shaikhs, and 56 crores of close friends. He has thirty-three crores of mansions. Living beings in 84 lacs of forms are in search of him. He showed his grace to Adam and kept him in paradise. They who have doubt in their hearts their faces are pale; they ignore the book and do evil deeds; they blame others and they entertain grudge against God; they would receive punishment for their misdeeds. God is the giver of all gifts and others are all beggars; they become sinners if he refuses to bestow his grace. Kabir seeks his protection as a slave so that out of his mercy he may keep Kabir close to him.³⁹

Kabir does not see any point in speaking to the Qāzī: he likes to wield power and Kabir is a humble slave of God. Allah, who is the source of all righteousness (dīn), does not like oppression. One cannot go to paradise simply by reciting the kalima, offering prayers (namāz) and keeping fast (rozah); the ka'bah is concealed within oneself if one were to know. To do justice is to offer prayers; to know God is to recite the kalima; to control the senses is to spread the prayer carpet; this is the way

to realize righteousness. One can gain paradise by recognizing the master, being kind to living beings, by eradicating self-centredness, and by showing consideration to others. The same clay appears in many forms; and in each form is God. The $Q\bar{a}z\bar{i}$ is alien to the right path; he is preparing for hell and not heaven.⁴⁰

The $Q\bar{a}z\bar{i}$ keeps the fast to please Allah, and he kills living beings to please his palate; he is so self-centred that he does not listen to anyone else, and goes on and on with his nonsense; he does not realize that the One God is within him too; he does not reflect on it; he remains preoccupied with the law $(d\bar{i}n)$ and, unaware of the reality, he wastes the opportunity of his life. The books say 'Allah is true; he is neither female nor male'; the $Q\bar{a}z\bar{i}$ does not read and reflect (on these things) and he gains no knowledge. That the Unseen Allah is within everyone can be realized only after deep thought and reflection. 'Kabir shouts aloud that the same God is in both the Turk and the Hindu'.

Kabir refers to the Indian scriptures, the Brahman and the yogī much more frequently than to the Semitic books and the Qāzī, the Mullā and the Shaikh. There are references to the four Vedas without being bracketed with the kateb. Smriti is the daughter of the Veda; it has the whole world in chains which never break. Kabir has freed himself from the shackles of caste and ritual by turning to Ram. In the abode of the Attributeless (nirankar) there is no day and there is no night, there is no Veda and there is no Shāstra. 'Meditate on him O mad man, says Kabir'. Listening to the Vedas and the Puranas Kabir felt inclined to follow the path of rituals, but only to discover that even the wisest of pandits left the world in hopelessness and they were all swallowed by Death. 'O my man you could not do the only thing needed: you could not recite the name of Raghpat Raja'. Nothing comes out of reading or listening if one does not attain bliss (sahaj) which results from appropriating the Name of God.42

Quite obviously, Kabir's Rām-nām stands opposed to the Vedas and the Purānas. They are compared with the sandal wood loaded on a donkey. The ill-advised pandit is bound to sink along

with his family because of his indifference to Rām-nām. He kills living beings and calls it dharma; what then is adharma? If he is a munī, then who is a butcher? He does not know; what can he teach? He sells learning for money. If one were to ask Narad and Bias and Sukdev, they would confirm that liberation lies in appropriating devotion to Ram; otherwise, one is bound to sink. They who are pulled down by the four Vedas cannot enable their disciples to swim. Duality would last so long as there are the six schools of philosophy, and the eighty-four Siddhas. Learning is of no use. All books (kagad) should be consigned to the running water; one should single mindedly reflect on the fifty-two letters and concentrate on the feet of God. Kabir acquired no learning and does not debate; he is intoxicated with singing the praises of God. If people think he is not wise, they need not follow him. But devoid of wisdom is he who does not recognize himself; he who recognizes himself recognizes God.43

The Pandit and the Brahman figure prominently in the compositions of Kabir. They appear to represent the opposite of what Kabir stands for. Their learning is contrasted with Kabir's knowledge (giān), and their misery with Kabir's bliss. The superior status claimed by the Brahman is contested by Kabir. All spring from the seed of God, and no one is conscious of the distinction of family in the mother's womb. When does one become a Brahman? If he is a Brahman because he was born to a Brahman woman, why was he born in the same manner as others? 'Why are you a Brahman and I a Shudra? Does blood flow in my veins and milk in yours? He alone is Brahman, says Kabir, who meditates on Brahma'. The pandit does not reflect on the 'artist' who has created the sky full of stars and who keeps it in place, who has given light to the sun and the moon, and who is present in the whole universe. 'Only he who has Ram on his lips and Ram in his heart, says Kabir, can know' that artist. The pandit reads the Vedas all his life and dies without attaining to liberation. Kabir's God can turn a fool into a learned pandit, and a pandit into an ingnoramus. The people follow the easy path shown by the pandit but Kabir

has chosen the difficult path of dedication to Ram. The Brahman remains entangled in the four *Vedas* all his life and dies without attaining liberation; he is a teacher for the world but he is no teacher for the devotees of God (bhagats).⁴⁴

The Jogi too figures frequently in the compositions of Kabir. He becomes an epithet for God when Kabir says that in the three worlds there is only one yogī. This is no measure of Kabir's appreciation for the yogīs. He attaches no importance to their way of meditation (yog, dhiān). Indeed, the yogīs fail to know God and die entangled in the matted hair. Their austerities in the wilderness do not save them from the noose of Death. The staff. the ear-rings and the cloak of the yogī are nothing more than a bhekh and Kabir tells him to discard the deception (kapt) of āsaņa and pranayam. The matted yogī is placed in the category of 'impure' (mailā). He is bracketed with the Mullā and the Qāzī, the Hindu and the Musalman, none of whom in Kabir's view professes right beliefs, practises good deeds, or pursues the right path. The yogI remains intoxicated with his peculiar kind of meditation (yog, dhiān). At the end, 'his cloak is burnt and his begging bowl is broken; his sport has ended; what is left behind is ash'.45

In a whole verse Kabir dwells on the death of a yogī. Not a drop of nectar now trickles in the highest spiritual state (gagan nagar); there is no sound of the unstruck music (nād). God has taken away the soul (hans). Where now is he who used to speak? He should have stayed with the body, and given discourses to people. No sākhī or shabda is now uttered by the body; there is no consciousness; the moving spirit has been withdrawn; where is now that player who used to live in this structure? His ears cannot hear and his organs have no power; his feet cannot move and his tongue has lost its speech. The five senses of the body do not wander any more; the mind and the heart are stilled. All the ten ties (band) have snapped; all friends and relations are left behind. 'He who meditates on God, says Kabir, is freed from all ties in his life'. 46

The yogīs claim that yog is extremely sweet and there is no other path that is as good. They suffer from self-deception. Understanding comes only through God's grace and through the True Guru: this is the way that dispels darkness and shows the pearl of understanding. This state cannot be described, as the dumb cannot tell the taste of jaggery (gur). In another verse Kabir's denunciation of yog becomes satirical. If yog is acquired by wandering naked, then all the deer in the forest should attain emancipation; if siddhī is acquired by shaving, then all the sheep should attain emancipation; if abstaining from ejaculation leads to liberation, then all the eunuchs should attain emancipation. Kabir repeats the familiar idea that emancipation is not possible without the Name of Ram. He is convinced that the path of the yogīs does not possess the efficacy which they claim for it.⁴⁷

Kabir uses the terminology of the yogīs to convey his own message. Consciousness and remembrance of God are his earrings (mundā), and he wears understanding as a cloak. He sits in meditation in the cave of the void (sunn), and the renunciation of desires is his panth. He is such a bairāgī that he fears neither death nor separation. Seeing God's immanence in the universe is his horn (singī), and looking at the world as ephemeral is his bag of ash (batuā). In his deep meditation māyā is turned upside down, and he is released from attachment. His man and breath combine to produce two gourds which are used to make a vīnā; its strings do not break, and unstruck music is heard. His man hears this music, and māyā trembles in fear. 'There is no rebirth for such a bairāgī, says Kabir, he has played well in life'. Standing for Kabir's own ideas, the terms of the Yogīs in these verses, paradoxically, reinforce the rejection of their ideas and practices. 48

Rejection is reinforced further when Kabir tells us what real yog is. To die unto self in life is the way to find life eternal in God. To remain unattached amidst attachments is the way to put an end to the cycle of death-and-rebirth. To keep the mind steadfast in the instruction of the Guru is the way to taste nectar. The arrow of the Guru's instruction shatters ignorance, and light is

revealed; the illusion created by the darkness of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ disappears, and one reaches the eternal abode (shivghar). Devotion to God keeps one afloat while the whole world is engulfed by $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ and kept in chains. When the mind is absorbed in God the sense of duality (dubidhā) runs away. By complete devotion to God Kabir has actually seen the One. Kabir uses the terms of the Yogīs to underline the importance of the Guru's path ($m\bar{a}rg$) with its $gi\bar{a}n$, dhiān, shabad, the control of senses, kindness, inner purity, experience, and love. 'The entire yog consists in the name of Ram who is the master of our bodies and souls; when he shows grace, says Kabir, he bestows his everlasting mark ($n\bar{i}s\bar{a}n$)'.49

Kabir tells the Sants what real yog is. Restraint on speech should be the mundra, kindness should be the jholī, and reflection should be their khappar; their khintha should be their body itself, and their resting staff should be the Name. With such yog, they can turn to the Gurū and combine bhog with jap, tap and sanjam. Their intelligence should be their bibhūt, and God-consciousness should be their singī. Bairāg should be their round for begging (pherī), and their man should play the kingrī. Control of the five senses should be their tārī. 'Listen tō me O Sants, says Kabir, righteousness and kindness should be the small orchard around you'. 50 Evidently, a thorough familiarty with the ideas and practices of the Jogīs does not mean approval.

Kabir uses the word Vaishnava in two of his shaloks. In one of these the Vaishnava is contrasted with the $s\bar{a}kat$. The former's bitch is better than the latter's mother; the one hears the praises of God every day and the other incurs sins. This can be taken as a complimentary comment on the Vaishnava. However, if one becomes a Vaishnava and puts on four $m\bar{a}l\bar{a}s$, so what? He is like gold filled with $l\bar{a}kh$. It is quite safe to infer that Kabir does not bracket himself with the Vaishnavas. There is only one reference to the Vamachari Shaktas in Kabir's compositions and that too is metaphorical. It is not complimentary. Their indulgence in meat and liquor (and sexual intercourse) is nothing more than the worship of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$.

Kabir's attitude towards religious personages other than the Brahman, the pandit, the mulla, the Qazi, the Shaikh, the Yogi, the Vaishnava and the Shakta is reflected in some of his compositions. They are mentioned in general terms as siddhas, sādhaks, munīs, jatīs, tapīs or tapsīs, sanyāsīs, kaparīs, monīs, jangams and rikhīs; the renunciants are mentioned as a general category; and there are references to bhekhs. They are presented as following useless or inefficacious paths; and they are told to follow the path of bhaktī, and to appropriate the Name of Ram. Kabir's preference is explicitly stated: not learning or asceticism, but bhaktī. The representatives of the path of bhaktī are his sādhs and sants. They are venerable and worthy of service. 'The home in which a sādh is not served and in which there is no worship of God, says Kabir, is a cremation ground inhabited by evil spirits'. 'Worthy of service are only two: the Sant and Ram. Ram is the bestower of emancipation and the Sant leads to the recitation of the Name'. There is no dirth of learners (sikhs), and many of them fail to attain liberation because of their own fault. They who adopt the path of love and devotion (prern bhaktī) become pure (khālsā).52

Kabir does not see any merit in the worship of idols, and shows his disapproval of the practice in different ways. The leaves and flowers which are torn from plants to be offered to an idol are animate, while the idol of stone is inanimate. When the sculptor was at work he placed his foot on the chest of the idol, but the idol showed no reaction to this humiliation. How can it respond to the prayers of those who worship it? Whatever is offered to the idol is actually eaten by the *pujārīs*; the idol does not eat because it cannot eat anything. The whole world has been misled to worship stones, but not Kabir; he has been saved by Ram through His grace. 'The stone has been installed as a god, says Kabir, and the whole world worships it; they who place their trust in this god shall be drowned in the mid-stream'. 53

Pilgrimage to places regarded sacred ha no merit either. One cannot go to heaven by bathing at *tīraths* if there is dirt within. The people may be impressed but God cannot be deceived. The

frog remains in water, bathing all the time, but goes on suffering from death-and-rebirth. A hard-hearted man goes to hell even if he dies in Benares. The Sant of God would save a whole host and not merely himself even if he dies in Harambha. There is no use in keeping the body clean if the inside is dirty. All the sixty-eight tiraths cannot wash away the inner dirt of a man. He who bathes every day is no different from a frog if he is not inclined towards the name of Ram.⁵⁴

For Kabir, a mark on the forehead and a rosary in hand, without devotion to God, cannot please Ram, just as offering leaves and flowers to an idol is of no use. The woman who discards remembrance of God and keeps fast to placate a godling is born as a she-donkey to bear the load of four maunds. Kabir has no appreciation for the practice of the Brahman to 'purify' the ground with cow-dung, on which he sits to eat his meal. In Kabir's view every thing connected with $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ is impure; therefore, only they are pure who cultivate the right kind of attitude through the right kind of reflection. Among the items which are mentioned as impure $(j\bar{u}th\bar{a})$ in support of the general point are mother and father, their progeny, all others who are born and who die, the tongue and the speech, the ears and the eyes, the fire, the water and the one who cooks, the service spoon and the one who is served with it, the cow-dung, the plastered spot and the circle that is drawn around. 55

Kabir is opposed to the rite of *shrādha* in which Brahmans are fed for the benefit of dead ancestors. No one respects his ancestors when they are alive, but concern is shown for them after they are dead. No food can reach them; it is devoured by dogs and crows. Is this the way to ensure their well-being? They are enable to ask for or utilize anything, like the gods and foddesses made out of clay. Kabir denounces the magical idea that a woman can conceive if she eats food cooked on the fire of a pyre in the cremation ground. The woman who does this is born as a female snake and eats its own progeny. Kabir's view that experience and reflection are preferable to learning is underlined in a composition based on the Gurmukhi alphabet. Kabir's view that no day or time

can be auspicious or inauspicious is expressed in a composition on fifteen *tithīs* and seven *vārs*. To think that anything can happen independently of God's will is to entertain duality, and so long as duality is there one cannot know God.⁵⁶

Kabir does not appear to reject begging and renunciation. If one can sing the praises of God in the company of Sants, the begging for food is preferable to a tall mansion full of gold and beautiful women, a flag flying on its top. Kabir is not prepared to stake any claim to a large territory or powerful rule; better for him is begging that brings all kinds of food. Mendicancy appears to be justified for those who follow a spiritual path as a whole time pursuit. Though Kabir is generally opposed to renunciation he can pose a dichotomy between the life of a house-holder and the life of a renunciant. A house-holder should either practise dharma as a house-holder or adopt bairāg; if a bairāgī adopts the life of a house-holder it is his misfortune. Kabir's tolerance of mendicancy and renunciation appear to go together: the latter is not possible without the former. The renunciant has to subsist, and the only option open to him is mendicancy.

There can be no doubt that Kabir accepts the idea of transmigration whole-heartedly. He refers to eighty-four lacs of 'lives' which is not merely a metaphor. Among these 'lives' is not only the life of a yogī, a jatī, a tapī, a brahmachārī, a rājā and a bhikhārī, but also the lives of plants which cannot move, the living beings which crawl, the animals which can walk and the moth-like creatures which fly. Thus, there are many kinds of life before one is born as a human being. That is why the life of a human being is to be treated as a great opportunity for attaining emancipation. If this opportunity is lost, the cycle of death-andrebirth is not broken. This cycle involves not only human life but also non-human lives. 'The coming-and-going (āvāgavan) occurs again and again, and this chain does not break'. What survives death and is born again and again is not a man or a god, not a jāti, not a yogī or an avadhūt, not a mother or a son, not a householder (girhī) or a renunciant (udāsī), not a king or a begger, not a body or a drop of blood, not a Brahman or a Shudra, not a tapā or a shaikh. What survives is a part (ansu) of Ram and like the ink on paper it is never obliterated. It is not born; it does not die. Indestructible and immortal, the soul suffers transmigration. The purpose of human life is to break this chain by following the right path.⁵⁸

Apart from the verses common to all the three traditions of Kabir, there are verses common to the BIjak and the corpus of Kabir included in the $\bar{A}di$ Granth. Therefore, there is much that is common to the BIjak and the $\bar{A}di$ Granth. However, ahimsa and $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ are not so important in the latter as in the former. Moreover, there is much greater emphasis on personal God in the $\bar{A}di$ Granth than in the BIjak. Indeed, the concepts related to divine self-revelation figure more prominently in the $\bar{A}di$ Granth than in the BIjak.

Kabir contrasts $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ with sachch (truth) in one of his verses in the $\bar{A}di$ Granth. $M\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ is the female-snake which stings everyone. He who recognizes the truth (sachch) can swallow the female-snake. Her power comes from the One who has created it. He is the Truth. The True One turns men to Truth so that they may deal in things True. He sends them in all the ten directions while he himself is immovable. There is no other ruler like him. The earthly kings rule for a few days, but he rules over the three worlds for ever. 59 It may be added that the omnipotence of God is emphasized more in the $\bar{A}di$ Granth than in the $B\bar{i}jak$.

The Divine Order (hukam, bhana) is emphasized by Kabir in the Ādi Granth. The master (khasm) himself is the fire and the wind; if he burns who can save? One may meet the master by recognizing his hukam (order). The human soul (man) has no form or sign; it came into existence through Divine Order (hukam); when it recognizes the divine order, it would mingle with the divine. If he wills, one submits to his hukam and crosses over. If he wills, one recognizes the True One and submits to his Will (bhāṇā). He who understands is absorbed in sahaj'. He who recognizes God's hukam wins the game of life. Coming and going is through

his hukam; absorption in him is through the recognition of his hukam. His sight inspires fear; the recognition of his hukam leads to the state of fearlessness.⁶⁰

God's will is expressed in his grace too. One cannot do anything by oneself; if God wills, one meets the True Guru and begins to recite the only Name. 'Through the grace of the True Guru' (gurprasādi) is a phrase that occurs frequently in Kabir's verses in the Ādi Granth. A synonym for the phrase is gur -kripā, the kindness of the Guru. Kripa alone is also used. Another term used for God's grace is karm. Yet another is nadar. The idea of grace is consistent with the idea of hukam. One cannot attain to liberation by one's own effort alone.⁶¹

The epithet Sat-Guru as well as Guru appears in many verses of Kabir. 'You are the True Guru and I am a novice', says Kabir, and prays that he may meet God at the end. 'There is no up or down there; there is no day or night; there is no air or water; there is no fire either; that is where the True Guru abides'. 'To cross the ocean of fear, says Kabir, I have taken refuge in the True Guru'. The True Guru has shown him the path, says Kabir, the lord of the world is pleasing to him. One should not offer flowers to dead stones but to the living True Guru. The True Guru saves Kabir from being crushed in the oil-press of transmigration. In all these verses the True Guru is God himself as the divine preceptor. This is the sense in which Kabir uses the term Guru in his verses. At one place he is Gurdev too. 62

Like 'the grace of the Guru', the phrase 'the sabda of the Guru' is used by Kabir in some of his verses. The whole world is afraid of death; the sabda of the Guru has revealed the meaning of death. If the master is inclined to be kind, one's purpose may be fulfilled; by meditating on the Gur-sabda one may become a sohāgan. The word gurmat is used by Kabir for 'the instruction of the Guru', but the Guru here is not any human guide. Therefore, mat and sabda appear to be used as synonyms. Another variation is bachan used in the sense of mat (instruction). Just as Guru is equivalent to the True Guru, so the sabda is the same as Gur-

sabda. The word (sabda) is the means of release from $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ and of eternal subsistence in God. The Word is churned like curd by the mind as the churning rod, in the body as the pot. He in whom the Word is lodged by God is relieved from thirst for liberation. One is absorbed in the sabda of the Guru only if God is gracious. Anhad-sabda is used for the state of liberation in union with God. The word sabda is used also for ordinary talk or instruction. Generally, however, Kabir appears to use sabda for the divine voice within everyone.⁶³

As in the Bijak so in the Adi Granth, the keyword for Kabir is $n\bar{a}m$. Its importance for him is evident from the frequency with which it is used in his verses. Do not turn away from the nām of the Formless One, says Kabir; remain absorbed in it all the time. He who does not utter the nām of God even for a moment remains caught in the net of transmigration. How can we live without the support of Rām-nām? They who are awake to the nām day and night attain to siddhī. Taste the nectar of nām with your tongue to become the slave of the lord. The worldly men remain drowned in fear without the secret of Rām-nām. By seeing the Fearless One, Kabir remains absorbed in Rām-nām. There is no emancipation without the Name; the Name is the only means of emancipation. The whole world is blind without the name of Ram. The entire yoga consists in the name of Ram; the body and its breath belong to him. It is through God's grace that one turns to Har-nām. There is no emancipation without the name of Ram. Ponder well, everybody suffers degradation without the name of Ram; no one ever attained emancipation without the name of Har, says Kabir. Fear and delusion disappear when the name of Ram is lodged in the heart. Recite only the name Ram, says Kabir; take refuge in the One. Again and again, thus, Kabir underscores the indispensability of the Name for liberation.64

The concepts related to divine self-expression are often used by Kabir in combination. The Guru, his grace, hukam, and bhāṇā, for example, are used in one verse. The grace of the Guru and the name of Har are used in another. The sabda and hukam are used at another place. At yet another, the words used are gurū, hukam, sabda, kripā and nām.65

On the whole, Kabir's criticism of the prevalent systems of religious belief and practice, both Hindu and Islamic, is quite comprehensive. The scriptures, beliefs or practices of Mullas and Shaikhs, Brahmans and Jogīs, Vaishnavas and Shaktas, and others are denounced and discarded. There is no merit in practices like idol-worship, pilgrimages and shradhas, and in the ideas of purity or pollution, auspicious or inauspicious time. Kabir's conception of God is more of a personal deity than in the BIjak. Significantly, the ideas of divine self-expression, related to the concepts of truth, divine order, the divine preceptor, the word, the name, and divine grace (sachch, hukam, gurū, sabda, nām and kripā), is far more important in the Adi Granth than in the Bījak. Tansmigration is a concept that is equally important in the Bījak and the Adi Granth. However, ahimsa and $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ figure far less prominently in the $\bar{A}di$ Granth than in the $B\bar{i}jak$. Asceticism, renunciation and mendicancy are not given the short shrift that Kabir gives to many other contemporary practices.

V

Caste distinctions were sacrosanct for the bulk of his contemporaries, but not for Kabir. He compares the high caste with the elephant and the low caste with the ant to the former's disadvantage: when sugar is scattered in the dust the elephant cannot pick it up but the ant can eat it. They who are preoccupied with distinctions of caste (barn, abarn) suffer from haumai. There are no distinctions of caste in the eyes of God. 'People laugh at my caste, says Kabir; I am a sacrifice to this caste in which I have worshipped the Creator'. The love of God makes jāti, barn and kul irrelevant for attaining emancipation. It may be safe to draw the inference that caste for Kabir is no bar to emancipation. Conversely, the path of liberation is open to all irrespective of their caste.⁶⁶

Differences in the society are not confined to the distinctions

of caste. There are, for instance, the rich and the poor, the kings and the beggers. Kabir's God can turn a beggar into a king and a king into a beggar. He has given silk and clothes and comfortable beds to some, while others put on tattered rags and sleep on the ground covered with straw. However, Kabir advises himself not to be envious of the rich. Attachment to the things of this world is not good for they do not accompany anyone after death. Whatever happens should be accepted as God's bhānā. Kabir knows that the poor person commands no respect. If he goes to a rich person, the latter turns his back. If a rich person goes to a poor person he is received with respect. However, the rich and the poor are made by God, and they are 'brothers'. 'He who does not have Ram in his heart, says Kabir, is really poor'. God alone is rich; all others are paupers. The wealth of the name of Ram is never lost and it cannot be stolen. They who are intoxicated with wealth should know that if they have lacs of horses and crores of elephants Kabir has God. The connotation of rich and poor changes in the process. Kabir is talking of spiritual richness. On the whole, thus, poverty is not contested by him in the same way as caste.67

The woman figures quite frequently in the compositions of Kabir as an unmarried girl, as a bride, as a wife, and as a mother. She is a part of the family (kutumb). She has a husband and sons and daughters; there are daughters-in-law, and there are other relatives (bhāī bandhap). Since the natal home is this world and the life hereafter is the home of the in-laws, the metaphor carries the implication that 'a daughter cannot live all her life in the natal home: she has to get married. The guests (muklāu) appear soon after marriage to take her away, and she is properly dressed to depart. She is afraid that she might fail to become a sohāgan. Man's union with God is symbolized by marriage. The bride is naturally very happy that she is wedded to a unique bridegroom. In another verse the wife is anxiously awaiting the return of her husband; sighing, and in tears, she is unable to move or take her eyes away from the path, hoping to see him coming; she is imploring the crow to fly away and bring back the news of his arrival. In this metaphor she is a devoted and loving wife. The wife who is fascinated by other things fails to reach the goal.⁶⁸

That man's union with God depends on God's grace is portrayed through the metaphor of sohāgan. The wife adorns herself to meet her husband. God is the husband and man is the wife; the husband is great but the wife is petty. They live together and they have the same bed to share, but to be together in bed is extremely difficult. Fortunate is the wife whom the beloved likes; only she is sohāgan and attains release. Kabir is not consistent in the use of sohāgan as a metaphor. She is equated with māyā too.⁶⁹

A woman's delight or pride in her beauty can be the cause of her 'death', like the pandit's preoccupation with the reading of the Veda. The woman's adornment (sigār) is meant to please the husband. It is futile for an un-married girl to adorn herself; there can be no enjoyment without the husband. The wife who leaves her husband, or who is abandoned by him, is 'plundered'. The real husband is God who is always there for those who drink the nectar (amrit) of his name. These statements reflect the empirical situation around and indicate that the woman's position in a patriarchal family was subordinate to that of man. Kabir does not appear to contest this subordination.⁷⁰

The woman is a part of the family which itself is of no help to an individual. It can accompany the deceased only upto the cremation ground. Wealth collected through all kinds of fraud is squandered on the wife and the son. But they cannot share the punishment which eventually one has to receive on account of one's misdeeds. Like $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ and wealth, the wife and the son cannot bring any peace. The wife and the son, like the human frame, the home and property, do not last for ever; when their time comes they depart. Preoccupation with the family obliges one to forget God; amidst the din of its affairs one is visited by the messengers of Death. Thus, not the woman alone but the whole family is a part of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$.

Significantly, Kabir does not accept the idea of impurity associated with the woman who has given birth to a child. On the

assumption of this impurity the woman is kept in isolation for a fixed period and the practice is generally referred to as $s\bar{u}tak$. One verse of Kabir relates to this idea and this practice. If generation of life is something impure then both land and water are impure in which life is generated all the time. Impurity is there in death as in birth, and there is impurity everywhere. 'Tell me O pandit who is pure?' There is impurity in the eyes, the mouth and the ears; there is impurity in sitting down and in getting up, and impurity enters the kitchen. There are many who know how to entangle people (in useless beliefs and practices), but there is only one who knows how to free them. 'He who lodges Ram in the heart, says Kabir, knows no impurity'. '2 In this verse there is no direct reference to women but there is hardly any doubt that Kabir is talking primarily with reference to the impurity attached to the woman.

In this context, Kabir's references to satī become interesting. He tells the pandit (who upheld the practice and associated himself with it) to reflect on the thought that no woman can become satī without sat. Love for the living husband, and not mere enjoyment of conjugality, is sat for the wife. The one who regards $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ as sat, cannot even dream of God. The true sohāgan dedicates her body, mind, wealth and home to Ram. The idea that devotion to God and consideration for the living husband is preferable to becoming satī after his death is reinforced by another verse in which the widow on top of the funeral pyre proclaims to the spirits of the cremation ground that all the people have left and now her concern is with them. Kabir does not subscribe to the belief that the woman who becomes satI acquires merit. The determination to sacrifice one's life can be appreciated if it is cultivated for dedication to God. 'What I had in mind has happened, says Kabir; why should I be afraid of death now that I hold the coco-nut in my hand?' (like the woman who is ready to become satī).73

The service of those who are dedicated to God is of great value for Kabir. The woman who carries water (panihāran) for the men of God (Har-jan) is superior to the wife of a sovereign

ruler (chhatarpatī) who has innumerable oxen, horses and chariots. Why is the wife of a king denounced and the woman of God (Har-cherī) given honour? The former adorns herself for indulgence and the latter remembers the name of God.⁷⁴ The woman of God, thus, exists in her own right, outside the institution of patriarchal family.

Kabir refers to a number of secular professions in his compositions. Besides the weaver he refers to the distiller of liquor (kalāl), the juggler (bāzīgar), the boatman (khewat), the poet (kavī), the medical man (baid), the cultivator (kirsān), the potter (kumbhār) and the ironsmith (lohār). To figure most frequently in his compositions is the banjārā. In a metaphor of trade, God is the Naik and all the people of the world are his banjārās. Life itself is the capital, and good and bad deeds are the two oxen. The thirst for earthly things is the cart on which goods are loaded. Anger and lust are the tax collectors, and the evil inclinations of the heart are the highway men. The fine is paid with the body and thus the goods are carried to the other side. 'Listen to me 0 Sants, says Kabir, we have come to a difficult pass; one ox is tired coming up the hill, we should lighten the carrier to move forward'. This verse shows Kabir's familiarity with the caravans of trade and the context in which they operated.

There are some other verses too on the banjārā. Man is the nāik and his five senses are the banjārās. There are 25 oxen loaded with glass; there are 9 levers for loading, 10 carriers and 72 ropes. One should have nothing to do with a trade in which the capital decreases and the interest increases day by day. What the banjārā earned through conscious action is taken away by the tax collector, and the banjārā remains empty-handed. Lost is the capital and gone is the trade, and the goods are scattered. What the banjārā needed was the state of sahaj. Man does not attain the state of bliss if he remains engrossed in māyā. Life is given as capital to earn profit by turning to right belief and good deeds. If this is not done, interest on the capital goes on increasing so that huge amount stands on the debit side of the ledger by the time life ends. Some

trade in copper and bell metal, others in clove and *supārī*; the Sants trade in Gobind's name which is the most precious commodity. To make mind the ox, *giān* the carrier, and consciousness the journey is to ensure that the goods reach their destinatioin.⁷⁵

As with the banjārā so with the others, Kabir uses metaphors for soteriological purposes. Men of God are the jewellers who deal in the diamond-God; they transact business only when they meet a specialist in this merchandise. 'Do not untie the bundle. says Kabir, if you have got the wealth of Ram; it is a commodity that does not have a market, or an expert, or a purchaser'. In one of his verses, the apparatus for distillation (khathi) produces the sweet liquid in the state of bliss. He who drinks the juice of the giān of Ram, and of meditation on him, gets truly drunk with the state of bliss. To distil pure mahāras, one has to use one's body as the vessel; the sabda of the Guru as the jaggery, and the abandoning of thirst, lust, anger, pride and enmity as the bark which acts as the ferment; the whole universe is the distillation plant, and it is heated with the fire of Brahma. In another verse, giān is the jaggery, dhian is the bark of the mahua tree, and the man which entertains the fear of God is the apparatus for distillation. The true liquor is the name of Ram who bestows it on whomever he likes.⁷⁶

Kabir's references to other professions too are mostly metaphorical. The boatman stands for the guide; the boat stands for the name or the means to emancipation. The $loh\bar{a}r$ represents Death. The oil-press is the cycle of death-and-rebirth; half-hearted pursuit is the raw seed of mustard which yields no oil. The plough is mentioned literally, but the cultivator represents the five senses; cultivation is a part of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, and true cultivation is the cultivation of the name. The poet is bound to 'die', like so many others; the vocation of a true poet is to write the praises of God. The medical man cannot save others because he himself dies; he does not know that the efficacy of his medicine comes from someone else who gives and takes away life. Kabir's potter is God. His juggler too is God, and the world is his play.⁷⁷

Many of Kabir's metaphors come from gun-fire. The person

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who ignites the shot sees the effect. This is meant to imply that success in spiritual matters depends on one's inclination and effort. In another verse, the problem is how to capture the fort because it has a double wall and a moat. There are soldiers within, behind the trenches. The gate of the fort is strong and it is protected by guards. The rebel has to be caught, and the fort captured, in order to establish a lasting rule. This fortress is the body and the mind; it can be conquered with the remembrance of God. In another verse the metaphors come from the field of battle. The drum has been beaten and the warriors enter the field to do and die. The brave warrior is he who fights for righteousness (dīn) and does not leave the field even if he is cut into pieces.⁷⁸

Kabir refers to the rulers and members of the ruling class, both literally and metaphorically. Many kings spent their lives in collecting wealth and they died, leaving gold buried in the ground. The statement implies that these kings died without gaining anything lasting; their lives were futile. Death makes no distinction between the ruler and the ruled. The profits gained and the hoarded wealth buried in the ground do not go with them after death even though in life naubat was struck at their gate. The order (farmān) of the king has to be obeyed by his servants or slaves (bandas). It is for the master to feel pleased or displeased. He has the power of life and death over his slave (ghulām). The king in this verse is actually God. Indeed, there is no king like God. The other kings last for a few days and make a false show of their power. The real power is with the true king and he lasts for ever. He is the great ruler. Some go to his court laughing and come back crying; others go crying and come back laughing. Habitations become wildernesses through his power and wildernesses become inhabited. He can turn water into land and land into water; he can raise a mountain in place of a well. He can raise one to the sky or bring one down to the earth. He can turn a king into a begger and a begger into a king. He can turn a fool into a learned man and a pandit into an idiot. He can turn a man into a woman and a woman into a man.

'He is the beloved of the sādhūs, says Kabir, I am a sacrifice to him'.

There are metaphors from the administration of justice and revenue. There are cells for confinement with guards placed over them. Criminals are sawn or crucified in capital punishment. There are chains for the hands and feet and necks of the accused. There are kotwāls for maintaining law and order and to safeguard property. There is the dīwān to take account of revenues collected; and villages are given in jagīr. The king's order comes and the collector is called to the Dīwān's court for rendering account; he wants some time for settling arrears, but no time can be given to him any more. He has wasted the opportunity of his life by forgetting the king. There is one fort but it has five shiqdars, and all the five demand revenue. The assessee has not cultivated the land and he cannot pay. The patwārī too is after him. There are nine measurers and ten munsifs, how can the ra'iyat remain in the village; they do not measure properly and they overcharge. This may be taken as evidence of the oppression of the peasantry in the times of Kabir. God who is everywhere and in everyone has given the gift of the name to Kabir, and in Dharam Rai's account-book there is nothing against Kabir's name.80

Kabir chooses his metaphors from human activity too. His metaphors relate to churning, dancing, playing, riding, stealing and wearing turban. Worn acutely, the turban symbolizes pride and the wearer is warned that the crow would peck with its beak at the head which now is adorned with the turban. The five senses of man are thieves who steal the capital of his life. The rider symbolizes in one verse the man who is moving towards the goal of emancipation. The game of $p\bar{a}s\bar{a}$ is compared with the game of life. The head sacrificed in the love of God becomes the ball with which game is played. Dance in one verse is the dance of life. In another, the true dance is all one's activity dedicated to God. Churning the milk for butter becomes a symbol for spiritual effort leading to emancipation. To obtain butter by churning the milk also means to arrive at the desired destination.

Like human activity, things made by man are used by Kabir for his own purpose. The lamp represents life, and also the light within man. Sarāi, the place where one spends the night during travel, becomes a symbol for the world. Unbaked pot represents the human body which cannot hold the soul long, just as the unbaked vessel cannot hold water. The human body is compared also with a city which has nine gates. Home can stand for the next world. If butter represents the highest spiritual state, buttermilk (chhachh) represents the things of this world. The human body is represented by the musical instrument too. The Guru's sabda becomes a pillar. Haumai becomes a wall that stops water from flowing. The sabda of the Guru serves as an arrow.⁸²

Vegetation, both natural and cultivated, becomes the source of Kabir's similes and metaphors. The tree can represent the world. It can represent God too. Chandan symbolizes good company. It also represents intrinsic quality which remains unaffected by evil things around. It stands for the saintly person who influences those who come into contact with him. The bamboo represents the man who remains uninfluenced by good company. Neem represents an intrinsically bad quality which nothing can change. Kamal is the light of God within man. Leaves symbolize transitoriness of human life. God becomes sugar scattered on sand; jaggery represents reward for good deeds; and sugarcane stands for the human being who acquires merit through sacrifice. Good deeds are saved as a fruit to be presented to the master. 83

In the animal world, the parrot in the cage reminds Kabir of a man ensnared by $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$. The man who remains occupied with collecting wealth reminds him of the honey-bee. The human man is a bird that flies from place to place. The common fly is a man with low inclinations. The swan represents the human soul. The fish represents the human being in danger of being caught in the noose of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$. The elephant represents the human man and, captured by the lure of female elephant, it represents human beings in the snare of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$. The monkey captured by the lure of grain is bracketed with the parrot and the elephant and, therefore,

represents the man ensnared by $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$. The female snake symbolizes $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$. The cobra represents evil company. The pig symbolizes human life at the level of animals; even so, the pig is better than a sinner. The dog stands bracketed with the pig; it is as bad as a sinner. However, it can also be humble and dedicated to its master and, therefore, it represents a man wholly devoted to God. That is why Kabir likes to be God's kukar (dog).⁸⁴

Finally, natural objects serve as a source for Kabir's similes and metaphors. He subscribes to the beliefs that *pāras* can turn iron and copper into gold; it stand for the agent who changes a person of low spiritual state into a person of high spiritual state. Both antimony and *kājal* represent something that soils the soul. Fire represents all those things which attract man's senses and provide sensual pleasures; *jot* represents the divine light within man. *Lākh* stands for outward brilliance which conceals demerit. Low value or no value is indicated by the *kaurī* in exchange. Humility is represented by a wayside pebble, dust and water. The blow shell (*sankh*) stands for a man who is separated from God. Wilderness is the heart without Ram or a place in which God is not remembered. By contrast, the ocean represents God.⁸⁵

Kabir makes use of myth, legend and history for his own purposes. He refers to Rama as a man and not Kabir's Ram who is present in everyone. Hanuman is in the category of past individuals who were 'awake'. Ravana is presented as a person who remained indifferent to God and perished in spite of his power: not even a lamp was burning in the house of Ravana who had a lac of sons and a lac and a quarter of grandsons, whose kitchen was heated by the sun and the moon, and whose clothes were cleaned by fire. Kabir ridicules the general belief that Krishna was born in the home of Nand as a reward for his bhaktī. Where was he when there was no earth and there was no sky? He whose name is Niranjan is never born and never dies. Kabir's master is he who has no father and no mother. Krishna is a historical figure. He prefers to visit Vidur rather than Duryodhana who is so proud of his pelf and power as to forget 'Sri Bhagwan'; the poor Vidur,

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by contrast, is devoted to God; therefore, his water is preferable to Duryodhana's milk, and it tastes like nectar (amrit); his $s\bar{a}g$ tastes like $kh\bar{i}r$. Indeed, the master of Kabir does not recognize any distinctions of $j\bar{a}t\bar{t}$.

Elsewhere, however, the idea of divine incarnation is not altogether rejected. Prahlad is mentioned as a sant who was saved by God, using nails to kill Harnakhash. Prahlad was sent to school with other children but he refused to learn anything because of his exclusive interest in 'Sri Gopal' and his strong attachment to the name of Ram. He had nothing more to learn, he insisted. When Harnakhash came to know, he called Prahlad and told him to give up Ram. Prahlad refused emphatically to give up his dedication to the creator of land and water, and hills and mountains, and to let down his gurū. He would prefer to be burnt and killed rather than leave Ram. Harnakhash drew his sword and challenged Prahlad to call his protector. Coming out of the pillar closeby, Narsingh killed Harnakhash with his nails. The Primal Being is the god of gods; he became Narsingh to save his bhagat. 'No one has fully comprehended him, says Kabir; many a time has he saved (bhagats like) Prahlad'.87

Among those who were saved through the name of Ram were Ajamal, an elephant, and a prostitute, though they had committed evil deeds in the past. Among those rare individuals who awoke to the need of remembering God were Sukdeo (the son of Vyas) and Akrur (the maternal uncle of Krishna); among them was the long-tailed Hanvant (Hanuman); Shankar (Shiva) awoke to this need by serving at the feet (of the Primal Being); and in the Kali Age, Nama (Namdev) and Jaidev awoke to the need (of remembering the name of Ram). There are many ways of falling asleep but there is only one way of waking up: by turning towards the Guru. What matters more than anything else in the life of human beings, according to Kabir, is the remembrance of the name of Ram.⁸⁸

We can see that Kabir appropriates the received tradition to use it for his own purpose in the context of his own system. God

cannot be confined to a limited space or time: he does not incarnate. Bhakti is the only means of emancipation, and it is not possible without the name and the Guru. God has protected his devotees in all ages. Differences of caste are irrelevant for liberation. What is implicit in Kabir's use of the received tradition is that *bhakti* was not something new but a tradition coming down from the ages past.

We can see that Kabir contests caste in strong and unambigious terms to establish the point that liberation, the supreme aim of human life, is open to all, including the lowest of the low. A severe indictment of the contemporary social order is built into this idea. Poverty is not contested in the same way as caste. Women are generally seen as members of the patriarchal family in their subordination to men, or even as a part of māyā. The ideal of sohagan makes the lord accessible to women in theory. Sati is appreciated as the metaphor for total dedication. The idea of impurity attached to women is discarded. In at least one verse the woman is seen as a devotee of God in her own right. Kabir uses metaphors and similes from the natural and the social environment, and from myth and legend, for soteriological purpose, yielding very little social comment. His references to the rulers and their administration reveal that he had no appreciation for contemporary rule. If anything, it was oppressive. Kabir used myth and legend to express and project his own ideas.

VI

Our analysis of the compositions of Kabir leaves no room for doubt that he discarded all the contemporary systems of religious belief and practice, and expounded a system of his own which cannot be characterized as Islamic or Hindu. This is not a startling conclusion. Lorenzen had observed over a quarter of a century ago that 'the more genuine text collections attributed to Kabir show him rejecting both Muslim and Hindu religious traditions'. Subsequently, Linda Hess observed that, while drawing on various traditions, Kabir 'emphatically declared his independence from

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both the major religions of his countrymen'. It has been affirmed more recently that nowhere in his compositions does Kabir 'evince much of an attitude of acceptance toward the two great faiths of India'.89

Kabir questioned the legitimacy of the hierarchical varna order based on the principle of inequality. Contesting caste with great verve and consistency, he made spirituality accessible to the lowest of the low. His message, as mediated by his followers, had a great appeal for the people in the lowest strata of the traditional social order. However, it is not clear whether or not the idea of equality was given any institutional form among the Kabir-panthis. The Kabir-panthi tradition makes Kabir a celibate as against the Rajasthan and the Sikh tradition which make him a householder. Kabir himself did not reject the idea of renunciation and mendicancy; monkhood came to be given primacy among the Kabir-panthis. Kabir is more sympathetic to women in the Sikh tradition than in the Bījak. It is not clear whether or not women were encouraged to take to his path, or to participate in the modes of worship evolved by the Kabir-panthis. 50

There is no evidence to suggest that Kabir himself founded any institution. Ravidas refers to him as one among the lowly who were 'saved', and as a Muslim who attained liberation through devotion to God and was reverenced in the three worlds. Guru Amar Das (1552-74) refers to the julāhā Kabir as one who attained emancipation through the Guru's grace and whose bāni was sung by the people. Abul Fazl talks of the authentic sayings and doings of Kabir who was revered by both Hindus and Muslims for the catholicity of his doctrine and the illumination of his mind so much so that when he died the Hindus wished to burn his body and the Muslims to bury it. For Abul Fazl, Kabir was a muwāhid (who asserted the unity of God without subscribing to the beliefs and practices of any established religion) who discarded the effete doctrines of his own time. Numerous verses of Kabir in the Hindi language were still extant 'containing important theological truths'.91 There is no indication in these sixteenth-century references to

Kabir that he had founded a panth. It has been suggested in fact that the Kabir-panth was formed between 1600 and 1650. Around 1600, Nabha Das made the following comment:

Kabir refused to acknowledge caste distinctions or to recognize the authority of the six Hindu schools of philosophy, nor did he set any store by the four divisions of life (āshramas) prescribed for Brahmans. He held that religion (dharma) without devotion (bhaktī) was no religion at all (adharma), and that asceticism, fasting and alms giving had no value if not accompanied by adoration (bhajana). By means of rāmainis, shabdas, and sākhīs, he imparted religious instruction to Hindus and Turko alike. He showed no partiality to either but gave teaching beneficial to all. With determination he spoke and never tried to please the world. 92

This statement comes very close to what we find in the compositions of Kabir. However, Nabha Das makes Kabir a disciple of Ramananda, carrying the implication that Kabir was a Vaishnava. This point was elaborated by Priyadas in 1712 in his commentary on Nabha Das's *Bhaktamāl*. Already around 1650, the author of the *Dabistan-i Mazāhib* had used the epithet *bairāgī* for Kabir and made him a disciple of Ramanand, though at the same time he was a *muwāhid*.⁹³ It appears that the process of Vaishnavization of Kabir had begun by the seventeenth century. Possibly, this process and the formation of Kabir-panths went hand in hand.

According to Kabir-panthi tradition, four of Kabir's principal disciples founded four distinct branches: Surat Gopal in Benares, Dharmdas in Chhattisgarh, Jagudas in Bihar and near Benares, and Bhagodas in Bihar. This tradition is very 'dubious'. In any case, it omits an important branch centred near Patna, said to have been founded by two other direct disciples of Kabir, the brothers Tattva and Jiva. Some scholars have suggested that all these branches of the Kabir-panthis came up considerably later than the time of Kabir. Apart from several other maths in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, independent monasteries existed

in Orissa.⁹⁴ It appears that Kabir was claimed by a number of individuals as the founder of their system of beliefs and practices.

In the third quarter of the eighteenth century an Italian monk, Padre Marco della Tomba, who travelled in Northern India, Nepal and Tibet, and spent most of his time in north Bihar, noticed the Kabir-panthis. He saw 'a sect or kind of religion called Cabiristi, descended from a certain Cabir, a man considered a great saint, who had performed many miracles'. They were 'in great credit and number'. Pradre Marco took notice of Kabir-panthi version of the Ramāyan and translated their book Satnaus Cabir (Giān-Sāgar) into Italian. The Kabir-panthi faqīrs were strict vegetarians and laid great stress on ahimsa. They appear to have accepted influences from their socio-religious environment. 95

The trends of the eighteenth century got amplified and reinforced with the increasing influence and number of the Kabir-panthis in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, introducing a certain measure of Sanskritization too. The history of the Kabir-panthis shows that influences from Hindu social and religious behaviour had become operative in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to become more effective later. In spite of the fact that Kabir had sided neither with Islam nor with Hinduism, a Muslim branch of the Kabir-panthis also came into existence. Before the end of the twentieth century, however, there were no Muslim followers of Kabir. The panth of Kabir was wholly absorbed by the dominant Hindu culture. 96

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3

SANT RAVIDAS

A critical examination of all near contemporary evidence clearly suggests that Ravidas was a chamar of Benares who lived some time between 1450 and 1520. He could possibly be a younger contemporary of Kabir, but by no means a disciple of Ramanand. His songs began to spread beyond the area of Benares, perhaps during his lifetime but certainly soon after. In the sixteenth century, distinct oral traditions of the $v\bar{a}\eta\bar{I}$ attributed to him began to develop in Rajasthan and the Punjab. These traditions were incorporated into the collections of the Dadu-panthis. The Nath Siddhas of Rajasthan also incorporated vānī attributed to Ravidas into their own collections. In the Punjab, a distinctive version of his vānI was included in the Sikh scripture, the Granth Sāhib. Only seventeen compositions have been identified as 'a common core' in the $v\bar{a}\eta\bar{i}$ of Ravidas. This common core is most likely to be the original compositions of Ravidas himself. We may turn to this core for the ideas of Ravidas.

H

Ravidas uses a number of epithets for God. The term used most frequently is Ram, with several variations, like Rammiya, Raghunath, Raja Ram, or Ram Gussaiya. Most of the epithets generally used for Krishna are also used for God: Madhav, Murari and Gobind. Then there are other terms which signify 'master': Soami. Prabhu and Nath. Two other epithets used are Nārāyan and Niranjan. The multiplicity of epithets for God creates no confusion. It reinforces his direct statement that there is only one

God and no other. God is omnipresent and all powerful: 'One and the same Lord is in all; He is in every heart. He is nearer than my hand, says Ravidas; whatever happens is due to his will'.

God is with and without attributes at the same time. God is in all the three worlds but has no fixed abode. There is no other 'master' like God. He is unique $(an\bar{u}p)$. He is the only leader $(n\bar{a}ik)$. He is the giver of life and he sustains all living beings. He knows the innermost thoughts of men. He runs the shop within everyone. He is the gold and human beings are bracelets of gold; He is the water and human beings are its waves or ripples. God is the philosopher's stone that transmutes base metals (iron or copper) into precious gold (kanchan, hirn). He is the sandalwood tree (chandan) that imparts fragrance to all plants and trees in its proximity. He is the redeemer of sinners $(patit-p\bar{a}wan)$.

The essence of God is his $n\bar{a}m$. In one verse, $n\bar{a}m$ is simply 'the name'. More frequently, it is 'God's name': Ram-nām, or $n\bar{a}m$ -Nārāyan. The name is Ravidas's support, his life his breath and his wealth. These verses underline the efficacy and indispensability of the name for emancipation. Ravidas tells his listeners to appropriate the name $(n\bar{a}m$ -samhār). There are several phrases which suggest that Ravidas recommends the remembrance of God through the repetition his name: sumirnā, japnā, chetnā, bhakhnā. There are some other phrases which suggest inner meditation: hirdey nām samhār or ridey Rām. Appropriation of the name was an essential part of the right path, the path of bhaktī.³

Bhaktī, essentially, was devotion to the omnipotent lord and love for the omnipresent beloved. Ravidas prays for loving devotion: 'If you are a beautiful mountain, I am a peacock. If you are the moon, I am a chikor'. 'If you are a beautiful lamp, I am the wick; if you are the sacred place, I am the pilgrim'. 'The noose of Death is cut by meditating on you. Ravidas sings on account of loving devotion'. In this verse, Ravidas expresses the idea that God alone has the power to keep a man attached to him. There is no other master like him. For his worship, milk, flowers, water, sandal, incense and lamp do not constitute appropriate

offering: one should offer one's body and mind to the Lord. God is the only refuge. The rope that binds man to God is that of love (prem). Therefore, the men of God are not afraid of being cut into pieces; they are afraid of losing love. Gained at such high price, Ravidas does not want his love for God to lessen. There can be no $bhakt\bar{t}$ without love $(bh\bar{a}v)$.

Bhaktī is not one among several paths to emancipation: it is the only path now as in all the past ages. Ravidas rejects the idea that there were four different paths for the four cosmic ages: charity (sat) in Satayuga, ritual sacrifice (jagg, yajna) in the Treta. ritual worship (pūjāchār) in Duapar, and the name (nām) in the Kaliyuga. Ravidas goes on to say that the dharma prescribed for different castes and stages of life (varnāshrama dharma) does not lead to emancipation. Doubts increase by listening to the Vedas and the Purānas. Fear does not depart by following any such prescription. Pride (abhīmān) does not disappear. Inner impurity is not removed by bathing at places of pilgrimage. Such bathing is compared to the elephant's immersion in water. When the sun rises, darkness of the night vanishes. The philosopher's stone touches copper and turns it instantly into gold. The Guru opens the door to the divine presence within; bhaktī cuts through the net of illusion and shows God. Such is the efficacy of loving devotion (prem bhaktI).5

Ravidas can occasionally be a little playful in giving expression to loving devotion. Only his sinfulness gives to God the name of 'the redeemer of sinners' (patit-pāwan). As a good guide God should lead his followers aright because 'the servant is known from the master'. In another verse, however, God is compared with lovely silk while Ravidas himself is the silk-worm that dies when it leaves the cocoon: he has no merit and can be saved only through God's grace. He is determined to stick to the feet of the Lord at the cost of his life. He prays to God that he may not forget his slave; he prays that he may meet God. In seeing, meeting, or uniting with God lies emancipation (muktī). It is the highest state of bliss (parmānand).

The guide who leads to the path of liberation is God himself. At several places in his compositions, Ravidas uses the word 'gurū'. If it falls to one's lot one meets the gurū who is, the best of all philosopher's stones. The implication is clear: the gurū transmutes base human metals into gold. In another verse, 'knowledge of the gurū' (gur-giān) is far preferable to austerities of all kinds. In another verse, one meets God (Niranjan) through the Guru's grace. Finally, there is a reference to God as 'jagat-gur-soami', the master who is also the preceptor of the world. Clearly, Ravidas does not refer to any personal gurū but to the Divine Preceptor.'

Bhaktī, the name, the gurū and grace can lead to liberation from the chain of transmigration. But man remains in bondage because, in the first place, he has no control over his five senses. Each one of these is enough for the ruin of living beings: in the deer the sense of hearing, in the fish the sense of taste, in the bumble-bee the sense of smell, in the moth the sense of sight, and in the elephant the sense of touch (to gratify lust). Human life is a rare opportunity but ignorance and association with the base keep human beings in bondage, subject to the law of deeds in previous births. Devoid of giān, they remain subject to illusion. The pleasures of the senses keep the human mind engrossed in māyā; man remains a stranger to God. In fact the distance between man and God goes on increasing. Apart from the five senses, another set 'the five' (panchan) figures in the compositions of Ravidas: kām, krodh, māyā, mad and matsar. These five enemies of man are far more formidable. They transform virtue into vice: men feel proud of their poetic talent, high lineage, learning, austerities, knowledge, valour or charities. Man remains subject to illusion (bhram).8

Ravidas wants men to come out of their slumber and look at the reality. The human life (jIvan) and the world (jagg) are not eternal (sachch). The day that dawns passes away; we are not here for ever, we have to depart; others have gone before us; death is inevitable. To break the chain of coming-and-going $(\bar{a}vag\bar{a}van)$ one must realize that God alone is eternal and one should devote oneself to him. Only this can enable one to come out of wrong or dual affliation $(dubidh\bar{a})$. He who discards $dubidh\bar{a}$ is the real sage $(mun\bar{i})$. He becomes fearless (anbhai) like God $(kart\bar{a})$. Ravidas appears to give a lot of importance to 'knowledge'. Vegetation blossoms to produce fruit; when fruit appears the flowers vanish. Good deeds are necessary to obtain divine knowledge $(gi\bar{a}n)$; when $gi\bar{a}n$ is attained the law of deeds is of no consequence. The churning is meant to obtain the butter. To attain a state of desirelessness $(nirb\bar{a}n)$ to become liberated-in-life $(j\bar{i}van-mukt)$ is the supreme $bair\bar{a}g$.

Only on the basis of the idea of avagavan can Ravidas refer to living beings (jiā-jant), the lower forms of life (targad jon), innumerable births (bahut janam), the human birth as a rare opportunity (dulabh), and to death (jam) or the noose of death (jam phāsā). Indeed, āvāgavan is explicity mentioned in a verse which implies that release from transmigration is the supreme purpose of human life. The idea of transmigration is closely connected with the idea of karma. Everywhere living beings are subject to their deeds in the previous lives (karma). Deeds in the present, both good and bad, are recorded. Ravidas often refers to good deeds (karm), misdeeds (akarm), evil deeds (kutal karm) and sins (pāp), opposed to pāp is punn, a good or a virtuous deed. Ravidas emphasizes the importance of good deeds for attaining to liberation. Man comes into this world with the capital (pūnjī) of his deeds in previous births; he can earn profit from good deeds or suffer loss from deeds; the account of his deeds is meticulously kept. After death, god asks for the account (lekhā, lekho).10

The source of evil deeds which keeps one chained to transmigration is the mind (man) sold to māyā. Attachment to māyā is moh which is the opposite of man's love for God (prem). Out of this opposition arises duality or dual affiliation (dubīdha). That is why māyā is poison (bikh, bikhiā). Maya's web is wide enough to keep man entangled in its net (janjāl). The world is not ever-lasting; it is subject to destruction (phankhānā). But man

regards it as eternal (sachch). This illusion (bhram) keeps him in its grip like a noose (bhram-phās). To make his point, Ravidas uses the Vedantic similes of the king who becomes a beggar in a dream, and the rope which appears to be a snake. Maya conceals itself in wealth and comfort; it is found behind all suffering. The man of God does not suffer because he is not attracted by wealth and comfort. Ravidas compares the world with kasumbh and God with majīth: the former fades away but the latter holds fast. 11

As it may be expected, the attitude of Ravidas towards contemporary forms of religious belief and practice is determined by his conception of the right path (panth). There are not many references to others, but they are enough to indicate that he did not approve of them. The pandit, the jogī and the sanyāsī stand bracketed because they are proud of their positions; they do not appreciate the Name, and they fail to attain emancipation. The pandit, with his Vedas, Purāņas and Smritīs, his pūjā-archā, his āratī, and his karma-dharma, fails to reach God. It is significant to note that Ravidas uses the terms jogī, munī and bairāgī also for the genuine devotees of his conception. This carries the implication that only the genuine devotees of his conception are the real jogīs, munīs or bairāgīs. Similarly, he uses the terms siddhī and param-bairag in connection with the genuine devotees of his conception. We may be sure that Ravidas approves of one category of persons: they who serve God as his servants (sevak) and slaves $(d\bar{a}s)$, and cultivate good intentions and inclinations (subhāi). 12

Ravidas is conscious of his birth as a *chamār*. He is conscious that he belongs to the category of people regarded as untouchable: his $j\bar{a}t\bar{t}$ and lineage $(p\bar{a}t)$ are regarded as low and mean, and his birth (janam) as of no account. He goes into legendary or mythical past to identify the persons who were redeemed by $bhakt\bar{t}$ despite their low position: a hunter, a prostitute and one in the life of an elephant. All of them were saved in spite of their degraded state (durmat). A more significant example is that of Balmik who was an outcaste $(aj\bar{a}t)$ but who attained high status due to his devotion to God. He was loved by God, and his fame was not confined to

this world: it spread to all the three worlds. If such low grade beings could be saved, why not Ravidas? Conversely, a Brahman of high lineage who performs all the duties prescribed for the Brahman but who has no devotion in his heart, who does not lodge God in his heart, and who does not listen to his praises, is as low in the eyes of God as the *chandāl* in the eyes of a Brahman.¹³

Association with the true devotees of God is highly valued by Ravidas. Bhaktī is not possible without bhāv, and bhāv does not arise without sādh-sangat. To take refuge in God is to be in true association (sat-sangat) which for Ravidas is like honey to the honey-bee. It is through sādh-sangat that one attains the highest spiritual state (param-gat).¹⁴

In these core compositions of Ravidas, his belief in One God comes into sharp relief as both omnipresent and omnipotent, immanent and transcedent. He is unique, and he alone is eternal. The idea of divine incarnation is rejected by implication. The only true path to God is the path of bhaktī as loving devotion and complete dedication. This involves the rejection of the prevalent modes of worship. The prevalent systems of religious belief, their scriptures, and their modes of worship are of no avail. The name and the Guru are important as the essence of God and the divine preceptor. The supreme aim of life is liberation in life (jīvan-muktī), which becomes possible only through God's grace (kripā). Ravidas accepts the ideas of Transmigration and Karma rather contextually to emphasize the need of liberation and the importance of good deeds. The concept of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ is used to underscore the transitoriness of all creation, the lure of sensual pleasures, the hold of desires, and the strength of attachment and ego. Māyā is illusion because of its untruth. It is the cause of duality (dubidha) in one's attitude towards God and His creation. Ravidas is conscious of his low birth and confidently identifies himself with the outcaste ($aj\bar{a}t$). He prizes association with $s\bar{a}dhs$, that is, men who like him are devoted to God alone.

III

In the compositions other than 'the core' in the \bar{A} di Granth, new epithets for God are used: Pātshāh, Har, Har Rājā, Rājā Ram Chand, Shauh, Bāzīgar, Bhagwant, Mukand, Lāl, Thakur, and Kamlāpatī. These epithets only re-confirm Ravidas's belief in one God. 'The one pervades the universe in innumerable forms; he is the one who is present everywhere'. 15

God is transcendent as well as immanent. He is in the universe but not contained in it. Ravidas does not sing of God's power but his belief in the omnipotence and uniqueness of God comes out in his verses.

Seeing my poverty, everyone used to laugh at my state. I am now the master of eighteen powers due to your grace. 0 the bestower of emancipation, you know I am nothing. All living beings are under your power, and you alone are the fulfiller of desires. They who take refuge in you are relieved of their burden. You save the high and the low; otherwise they all remain entangled in the world. Why say more about the ineffable, says Ravidas: There is no simile for him who alone is like him. 16

God has no equal. He is the leader of the whole universe. He is beyond description and his qualities are beyond description. All agencies which fulfill men's wishes are under his control: sukh-sāgar, sur-tar, chintāmanī and kāmdhen; the best gifts are in the palm of his hand: the four padārthas, the twelve siddhīs, and the nine nidhīs.¹⁷

Ravidas devotes a whole composition to God as Mukand:

O the people of the world, repeat 'Mukand, Mukand'. Without him, your body suffers destruction (and you are born again and again). Mukand alone is the bestower of muktī. Mukand is our father, He is our mother. Remember him all your life till your last breath. His devotee is happy all the time. I repeat 'Mukand' with every breath. It is the lot of the fortunate ones to repeat his name. The real bairāgī serves Mukand with devotion. He is the wealth of the poor and the weak.

What can the world do to me if Mukand does me favour? He has obliterated the stigma of my jātī and made me a courtier (darbārī). The bestower of liberation knows the art of saving the world. He has given me knowledge (giān) to see the light (pargās). He has shown His grace to this worm and made him a slave of the Lord. My thirst now is quenched, says Ravidas, I repeat the name of Mukand and serve Him all the time. 18

The God of Ravidas is the cherisher of the poor and He exalts the low.¹⁹

Ravidas underscores the importance of the name. Kabir attained liberation through the name and became famous. There is nothing comparable with the name for attaining emancipation. The game of life is lost without the name. The name saves men from death (jam). The name annihilates the distinction of caste and lineage; it puts an end to all desires and the chain of death-and-rebirth. There are several phrases which suggest that Ravidas recommends the remembrance of God through the repetition of his 'name', like arādhanā and bhajnā. There are some other phrases which suggest inner meditation: pargās ridey dhār, liv, sahaj-samādhī and Ram-rang rātā. The name is all important:

Your name O God is my ablutions, and my $\bar{a}rat\bar{t}$. Without your name everything is false. Your name is my seat $(\bar{a}san)$ for worship, and my saffron-grater $(urs\bar{a})$. Your name is the saffron to sprinkle. Your name is the water and the sandal. The repetition of your name is the grating to offer. Your name is my lamp and its wick, and the oil I pour in it. I light it with your name and it lights the whole world. Your name is the string and the garland of flowers. Since all the eighteen kinds of vegetation are contaminated, I offer what you have created as pure, the name. Your name is the fly-whisk (chaur) I wave. The whole world is engrossed in the eighteen $(Pur\bar{a}nas)$, the sixty-eight (places of pilgrimage), and the four sources of life $(kh\bar{a}n\bar{t})$. Your name is my $\bar{a}rat\bar{t}$, says Ravidas; the True name is the food I offer to you. 21

This verse makes it absolutely clear that the name makes ritual worship dispenable. The name is true in contrast with everything else.

Ravidas sings of loving devotion (prem-bhaktī). He prays for devotion (bhāktī chintāmanī) that fulfills all desires. He is in love (prīt) with the creator of the universe and has nothing to do with things created by him. Nothing availed even Indra without the bhaktī of God. Bhaktī enables man to have God's vision (dars) and to experience him (anbhav). Ravidas says playfully that if God has bound him by attachment (moh), he has bound God by love (prem); Ravidas can get released by remembering God with devotion; therefore, God should think of the means of his own release. Nevertheless, Ravidas is like the fish while God is the water. Even when the fish is cooked and eaten it demands water.²²

The relationship of man with God is expressed by Ravidas through the metaphor of conjugality too. The sohāgan knows the worth of her husband. Discarding all pride she enjoys conjugal bliss. She dedicates her body and mind to him, and she does not listen to, look at, or talk to anyone else. She knows the pangs of separation, and she appreciates the pain of others. The woman who is not devoted to her husband, loses both the worlds.²³ The path to union with God is difficult to tread. One has to travel alone, without a companion.

The Guru figures in these as in the core verses of Ravidas. The 'gurū's knowledge' does not appear to be the knowledge imparted by a gurū but knowledge of the entity called the gurū. At one place, the phrase used is Satgur-giān, or knowledge of the True Guru. The sants possess this knowledge. Elsewhere there is a reference to the grace of the Guru (Gurparsādi) which saves one from hell (narak). The right path is shown by the Divine Preceptor and emancipation comes through divine grace. The idea of grace is emphasized at several places in Ravidas's compositions. It is through God's grace (kripā) that illusion (bharam) is removed. Through God's grace (kripā) Ravidas has the eighteen siddhīs in his palm. Ravidas prays for God's kind favour (dayā). He prays

that God may protect his honour (paij) so that his human birth does not go in vain.²⁴

Ravidas dwells on man's fascination with the world around: How the puppet of clay dances-seeing, hearing, speaking, and running around all the time. It feels proud on getting something and it cries when it loses anything. It is fascinated by thoughts, words, deeds and pleasures. Where does it go when it perishes?²⁵

Man does not realize that human life is short, and the things of this world are of no avail in the end:

The poor bird lives in the house of bones, flesh and veins; its wall is of water, its pillars are of air, and its mortar is of blood and semen. Man lives in the world like a bird on a tree. What is yours here O mortal man? You dig deep foundations and raise lofty walls; what you get in the end is three and half cubits of earth. The curly hair and the tilted turban you are proud of, are reduced to a heap of ash in the end. Proud of tall mansions and a beautiful wife, you lose the game of life without the name of God.²⁶

The human body is like the *khimbrāj* of the month of Bhadon; the crow hovers around you (waiting for the corpse) ²⁷ When you are dead you possess nothing and no one owns you:

Only for a little while does your body stay in lofty mansions with spacious halls and well provisioned kitchens. When it burns it mingles with the dust like a hut of grass. The members of your family, your relations and your friends are anxious to remove you from the house. Your wife who used to cling to you now shouts 'ghost, ghost' and runs away.²⁸

The world is a play; the man of God is not fascinated by this play; he is devoted to its producer and its director, the great player ($b\bar{a}z\bar{i}gar$). To be engrossed in $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ is to be short-sighted. Like the frog in the well, which has not seen the country outside, the man engrossed in $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ has no idea of the other world.²⁹ Ravidas underlines the importance of good deeds. The word $k\bar{a}gar$ (from

 $k\bar{a}ghaz$), that is paper, refers to the documents of accounts which is torn only on emancipation.

Ravidas discards the traditional systems of religious belief and practice to follow the path of the true devotees. Even the greatest of the jogīs fails to comprehend all the attributes of God. He remains alien to the Name. The way in which Ravidas refers to pirs, shaikhs and shahīds in one verse leaves no doubt that in his view they were not on the right path. Those who are on the right path are bhagats, sants and sādhs or sādhūs. They do not hanker after the things of this world. If you take the support (oat) of a sādhū, millions of your sins are washed away. Ravidas prays to God for the way of the sants, and the service of their slaves. For him, there is no difference between God and the sant.³⁰

Differences of caste are irrelevant for becoming a bhagat or a sādh:

The family in which God's sadh is born, be it with caste (barn) or without caste (abarn), be it rich or poor, it becomes famous in the whole world. The man who worships God, be he a brahman, a bais, a sūd or a khatrī, a dom, a chandāl or a mlechh, he saves himself and the families of his father and mother when he is purified through the remembrance of God. Blessed is his place, his village and his lineage. He enjoys the essence and abandons all other pleasures. He is so absorbed in this pleasure that the poison (māyā) has no effect on him. Equal to the bhagat is no one, neither a learned man nor a brave warrior, not even a crowned king. Like the lily in water, he lives in God: the birth of such men is blessed, says Ravidas.³¹

It is quite clear that an outcaste like a dom and a chandal can become a sādh or a bhagat. The mlechh are also bracketed with them.

Indeed, the lowest of the low can be redeemed. Ravidas is conscious of his low position. The members of his $j\bar{a}t\bar{t}$ live on the outskirts of Benares; they remove dead cattle for skinning; and they tan hides, and make and mend shoes. However, Ravidas is a

purified cobbler. Even the Brahmans of Benares show respect to him.³² It is not accidental that he identifies himself wifth the outcastes like himself among the true dovotee of God:

No one can do this but my beloved God, the cherisher of the poor: He has put an umbrella over my head. He is merciful to those whom the world regards as untouchable. He exalts the low without the fear of anyone. He saved Namdev, Kabir, Trilochan, Sadhna and Sain. Listen to me O Sants, says Ravidas, the Lord can do whatever he likes.³³

In another verse, Kabir and Namdev attain emancipation through their devotion to God. Ravidas refuses to concede that spiritual pursuit was the prerogative of any particular set of people. He puts it rather crisply at one place: one does not inherit God; the way to him lies in love.³⁴

Ravidas puts forth his conception of the heavenly city of bliss (beghampurā). There is no sorrow and suffering in this city. There is no fear of taxes. In this abode of eternal happiness there is the sovereign sway of the One Lord; there is no second or third. There are no guards to stop one at the palace-gate; one can go wherever one pleases. The city is thickly populated with the rich. 'Whoever lives in the city is our friend'. In this extended metaphor of a peaceful city, each resident lives freely, in his own place and independent of others.³⁵

The earthly city of Benares was different, where men like Ravidas were not left in peace. The socially respectable people (nāgar-jan), who were proud of their caste and lineage, were contemptuous of the poor and the outcaste. The upholders of varnāshrama dharma were intolerant of freedom in religious belief and practice. They were critical of any change in the status quo. Ravidas was acutely aware of their presence:

The man who indulges in slander earns no merit even if he bathes at sixty-eight places as a pilgrim, offers worship to all the twelve linga stones, and gives land with a well in charity. The slanderer of the $s\bar{a}dh$ is never saved; he is sure to go to hell. He may go to Kurukshetra at the time of the

solar eclipse and offer his wife with all her jewellry (to Brahmans), and he may listen to all the Smritīs, the slanderer earns no merit. The man who indulges in slander is born again and again even if he offers meals and builds mansions in charity, or attends to the business of others at his own cost. Why do you indulge in slander, O people, when the end of the slanderer is known? The sādhs know, says Ravidas, that the slanderer is a sinner who falls into the pit of hell. It is significant that the slanderer in this verse is a representative of institutionalized religion which was contested and rejected by Ravidas.

We can see that in these compositions the ideas of the core compositions are reinforced or amplified, with some differences of emphasis. There is the same conception of a unique God who is the bestower of liberation par excellence. There is greater emphasis on the importance of the name. For union with God the metaphor of the sohāgan is used. Among the discarded systems of religious belief and practice, the representatives of Islam are included. There is greater emphasis on the importance of the sant, and greater concern with the outcaste, including the mlechh. The kindred spirits are named. There is awareness of opposition from the representatives of established religion, especially the upholders of varnāshrama dharma. The Begampurā verse presents the heavenly city as a place of freedom and bliss for each of its residents.

IV

According to Callewaert and Friedlander, Ravidas refers to God as 'unique and incomparable', 'the unique pure essence', and 'the incomparable'. There is no other God like his God. He is 'unfathomable' and 'imperceptible' and he has 'no shape or form'. He is 'changeless' and 'formless'. He cannot be compared to anything. God is immanent. He 'permanently' 'pervades all places' and 'constantly dwells within everybody'. He is 'without and within, hidden end manifest'. He is 'the creator and the destroyer'.

God transcends the dichotomy of being 'with attributes' and 'without attributes'. He is 'not material, nor immaterial'. Ravidas addresses God as Ram, Raja Ram, 'the stainless king', 'the sultan of sultans'. He is Kamlāpatī, Ragūnāth, Rāghava, Keshava, Kānha, Mādhav, Murārī, Banavārī, Shyām, Gusāi, Gopāl and Govindā. However, Ravidas does not believe in incarnation. God is also Karīm (compassionate), Ghanī (bounteous) and khāliq (creator). Of vital importance to Ravidas is 'the name of Ram'. At the metaphysical level, nām refers to the concept of 'the essence of God'. And Ram for Ravidas is the name of God par excellence. He is not the avtār of Vishnu but the supreme God himself. It is through Ram in his nirgun state that the knot of doubt which separates the soul from God can be untied.³⁷

Ravidas seems to look upon man as consisting of three elements: the material body (tan), the mind (man), end the soul $(j\bar{\imath}v)$. The soul is spoken of as both separate from and in union with God. The jīv is regarded as feeling emotions, just as the individual mind does. The identification of the soul with the mind, causes it to perceive itself as 'I' and as separate from God. For Ravidas, 'you' (paramātma) and 'I' (jīvātma) have the same nature. In a phenomenal sense, ornaments and waves are as real as gold and water. The water and the wave are the same in essence but different in manifestation. Ravidas's view of the relationship between the soul and God does not fit clearly into the doctrines of any one philosophical school. Ravidas's man is that part of the personality which becomes ensnared in the world and which, when directed towards the divine, facilitates union with God. Under the sway of māyā, man is corrupted by its contact with the five senses, but it can become the temple within which God is worshipped.38

The phenomenal world $(sans\bar{a}r)$ is depicted in the $v\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of Ravidas as inherently transient in contrast permanence of God, the fugitive dye of the safflower contrasting with the permanent dye of madder. The fate of all souls is to be reborn as long as they

do not attain liberation. Crossing the ocean of sansār is synonymous with 'attaining liberation'. Suffering is inherent in existence in $sans\bar{a}r$. The only remedy is contemplation of God, abandoning 'worldly matters, self and other'. Ravidas depicts $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ as the goddess of delusion who has beguiled the world and led astray, a venomous serpentess whose bite causes suffering. He frequently warns of the inevitability of death. If the soul does not awaken during life itself, it will be born again into the suffering of $sans\bar{a}r$. Human life, thus, is a unique opportunity to attain liberation from existence in $sans\bar{a}r$.

For Ravidas, the role of the gurū is vital to the spiritual development of the devotee. However, he does not refer to a human being but to a divine gurū. For him the gurū is both God and the inner manifestation of God as guide. The true gurū is God and all the people of the world are his disciples. In the microcosm of man, the $gur\bar{u}$ is conceived of as the inner guide, the expression of God in man. Only the gurū can give the philosopher's stone, which is the experience of union with God. Another fundamental element in the teachings of Ravidas is devotion (bhaktī). Not the outward practices but an inner relationship with God is essential. This relationship is of mutual love. Prem bhaktī or loving devotion is as much a tie that binds the beloved to the lover as it ties the lover to the beloved. There is nothing in the external world that is fit to be offered to God. The only true way to worship him is through internalized devotion, with the mind itself as the offering for God. The main technique advocated by Ravidas to attain union with God is $n\bar{a}m$ -sumiran or 'the contemplation, remembrance, or recollection of the name'. The power of chanting Ram is such that it frees the soul from the cycle of transmigration.⁴⁰

In the teachings of Ravidas, darshan is seen as one of the goals of devotion, as a confirmation of God's love for the devotee. The vision of the personified God or of the true nature of reality brings relief from the suffering of life in sansār. The supreme state (param-pad) is attained through renouncing both desire and freedom from desire. When this state is attained one realizes that

there is nothing which exists separately from God. Ravidas speaks of anabhai in which there is direct experience of union with the supreme spirit. In this state there is total union with God in which no perception of the sense of a separate self remains. Ravidas refers to this state in which duality is dispelled and union with God is attained by the term sahaj. He also uses the terms sahaj shunya, sahaj samādhī, and sahaj sarūp. The importance of sahaj in the teachings of Ravidas is demonstrated by his profession that he is 'a trader in sahaj'.⁴¹

So far there is no significant departure from the teachings of Ravidas in the Sikh tradition. At the most, there can be a few differences of emphasis. However, this is not all that is presented by Callewaert and Friedlander as the teachings of Ravidas. One verse of Ravidas contains a complete description of the form of $s\bar{a}dhan\bar{a}$ known as suratishabda yog or the yoga of the contemplation of the word. The yogic context of this verse is firmly established in the refrain where it is said that one should meditate with the mind and breath fixed in the sushimnā nārī, the central subtle vein of the body. There are some other verses which contain references to yogic practices.

In the Sikh tradition there is no reference to suratishabda yoga. Callewaert and Friedlander suggest that there was a difference in the attitudes of the Sikhs and the Dadu-Panthis towards the Naths.⁴² We may agree with them. We must add, however, that this raises a serious doubt about the authenticity of the verses in question.

Exaggerated importance given to yogic influences in the Rajasthani corpus of the $v\bar{a}n\bar{i}s$ attributed to Ravidas comes to the surface also in the concept of sahaj. When Ravidas refers to sahaj shunya, he refers to a state of mental absorption. He often speaks of this state by using esoteric language which demonstrates the origins of this concept in the yogic traditions. The connection between sahaj shunya and the yogic tradition is suggested also by Ravidas's reference to Ram and Khuda: 'First I made a lamp of wisdom. Later I blew out the lamp. I renounced both the sahaj

shunya, I call on neither Ram nor Khuda'. Whereas in the Sikh tradition the state of sahaj is attained through $n\bar{a}m$ -sumiran, in the Rajasthani tradition it is attained through suratishabada yog too. The 'augmentation' of compositions in the Rajasthani corpus noticed by Callewaert and Friedlander appears to have resulted in a partial 'Nathization' of Ravidas. They have themselves omitted 39 compositions of the Rajasthani corpus from their critical edition of the $v\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of Ravidas on the argument that they represent subtraditions which, by definition, do not represent the basic characteristics of the $v\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of Ravidas.

V

It has been observed that the bhaktī vision of Ravidas seems to be 'not so much that God desires to reform society as that he transcends it utterly'; in the light of the experience of God, 'all social distinctions lose their importance'.45 We may turn to the world of Ravidas to see the social implications of his religious message. Most of his metaphors are contextual, used for soteriological purpose. There are references to the sun and the moon, the earth, hills, land and dust, the sea with its storm and waves, the day and the night, the light and the darkness, metals like gold and copper, and the river Ganges. There is vegetation, trees, flowers and fruit: lotus, water lily, tar, chandan, arind and khimbrāj. Among the fauna are elephant, deer, fish, bumble-bee, moth, frog, ox, honey-bee, peacock silk-worm, snake, crow, birds and worms. Among the things made by man are leather, shoes, rambī, clothes, paper, rope and wells. Connected with human activity are villages and cities, mansions, kitchens, milk and yogurt, turbun, burial, cremation and umbrella.

There are other metaphors which may yield some social comment. Tanning hides and shoe-making are mentioned in connection with the profession of *chamārs* but shoe-mending is also used as a metaphor for preoccupation with the body and its needs. Ravidas's *bhagat* is superior to the poet, the scholar and the warrior, all of whom are socially respectable. There are a few

references to rulers and their rule (rājā, narpat and chhatarpat, and rāj and pātshāhī). They represent the socio-political apex. Ravidas has no appreciation for them. In fact, the people are afraid of the tax-collector, and the administrator himself is worried about collection and its transfer to the royal treasury. This can be taken as Ravidas's comment on the administrative system.⁴⁶

In the society, there are masters and servants or slaves. There are rich and poor. There are Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, but there are also others who do not belong to any of these varnas, like the doms, the chandalas and the mlechha. There are individuals of high status (pad) and there are respectable citizens (nāgar-jan). The basic division for Ravidas, however, is between the people who have caste and the people who have no caste. His sympathies are with the latter. He feels strongly that they cannot be denied the right to pursue the path of liberation through loving devotion to God. The family is an important institution for Ravidas. He refers to father, mother, husband, wife and sons. He refers to relations, friends and companions. At one place, God is compared with father and mother. At another place, the beautiful wife is a source of pride and, therefore, a part of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$. The wife is compared with the devotee of God too. It is quite obvious, however, that Ravidas does not feel much concern for the woman. He contests caste more vehemently, than poverty, but he does not recommend renunciation.

In the field of religion, Ravidas is concerned primarily and largely with his own path, talking of bhagats, sants and sādhs as well as the path of loving devotion. The pandit, the jogī and the sanyāsī come in for mild but unambiguous disapproval. The activities associated with traditional religion - scriptures, ritual worship, pilgrimage to places regarded as sacred, varnāshrama dharma, charities, austerities and religious festivals - all are seen as useless. Reference to the religious beliefs and practices of his contemporaries are not many, but enough to draw the simple

conclusion that Ravidas did not identify himself with either the Vaishnavas or the Shaivas. The path is open to men of all castes and also to the untouchable outcastes.

Was it open to Muslims? If the term mlechha refers to Muslims, or includes Muslims in its ambit, the answer is 'yes'. There are only a few references to ideas and practices associated with Islam or Muslims. Apart from the terms like phankhānā and pursalāt, derived from Persian and Arabic, a number of terms used in the 'Begampura' verse are rather close to the originals: begampura itself, andoh, tasvīs, khirāj, māl, khauf, khatā, tars, jawāl, watan, khair, kāim, dāim, dom, som, mashūr, māmūr, mahram, mahal and khalās. This amounts to an appreciable familiarity. Ravidas appears to address himself to affluent Muslims in the context of burial. He refers to shaikhs, pīrs and shahīds in a context which may be worth serious consideration. He says that the family (kul) of Kabir believed in shaikhs, shahīds, and pīrs, and sacrificed cows at the time of 'Id and bakrId. The 'father' did things like those (vaisī); the son did such things (aisī) as made him famous in all the three worlds. The reference obviously is to Kabir's devotional theism resulting in emancipation. The context leaves hardly any doubt that Ravidas looked upon Kabir as a Muslim who attained emancipation through loving devotion. It may not be too much to infer that Ravidas's path of loving devotion was open to Muslims.

Ravidas was not a Muslim. Was he a Hindu? If so, in what sense? If Hinduism means belief in the *Vedas*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Smritīs* and the *Varnāshrama dharma*, Ravidas was not a Hindu. If it means belief in Shiva, Indra, Krishna or Rama, he was not a Hindu. In one contemporary connotation 'Hindu' stood for a person who belonged to one of the higher *varnas*. In this sense too, Ravidas was not a Hindu. A general connotation of the term in those days made every non-Muslim Indian a 'Hindu'. Ravidas could be a Hindu in this sense. But this connotation was not religious.⁴⁷

Ravidas does not use the term Hindu or Muslim in his compositions. He was not much concerned with this classification.

We may be justified in drawing the inference that Ravidas addressed himself to all the people irrespective of their caste and creed, and perhaps irrespective of their gender.⁴⁸

VI

Ravidas is said to have initiated disciples and to have started a tradition of his own. However, he does not appear 'to have established a formalised sect'. 49 There is no indication that he chose a successor or successors. It has been observed that the memory of Ravidas has been kept alive in the Punjab and elsewhere in North India by 'a loose network of shrines and pilgrimage centers - deras - dedicated to the devotion of his name, his poetry, and his image'. 50

However, there is hardly any evidence on such derās before the nineteenth century. Even in a twentieth century derā, there was no formal structure either of organization or of beliefs. Both in Uttar Pradesh, where the followers of Ravidas were called Raidasis, and in the Punjab, where they were called Ramdasis as well. Those who took Ravidas as their special patron were almost entirely chamār. The situation in the Punjab was complicated by the fact that a considerable number of chamārs had joined the Sikh Panth and were known as Ramdāsīs. 51

Ibbetson found the Punjab situation in the late nineteenth century rather confusing. He observed:

The census gives us no idea of the numbers of the followers of Ravidas because there are Ramdasi or Ravdasi Chamārs, as well as Raidasi Chamārs, and the two have become hopelessly mixed in the returns. The Ramdasi are true Sikhs, and take the *pahul* (initiation vows); the Ravdasis are not Sikhs, or, if Sikhs, are only Nanakpanthis, and do not take the *pahul*. Among the people themselves the two terms are by no means clearly distinguished.⁵²

There is hardly any doubt that *chamārs* in the Punjab joined the Sikh movement. It is possible that some of the followers of Ravidas too joined the Sikh fold. Similarly, in Rajasthan some of

the followers of Ravidas appear to have joined the Dadu-panthis.

More recently he has appealed generally to the leather working caste 'as a continuing symbol of lower caste pride'. 53

NOTES

- 1. Winand M. Callewaert and Peter G. Friedlander, *The Life and Works of Raidas*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1992, pp. 33-34, 78-80. Callewaert has discussed elsewhere why it is almost impossible to discover the authentic text of the verses of Ravidas or Raidas. 'Raidas and the Guru Granth', *Journal of Sikh Studies*, vol. xv no.2 (1988), pp. 23-34. Rather uncritical in approach is Darshan Singh, *A Study of Bhakta Ravidasa*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1981.
- 2. Ravidas's compositions preserved in the Ādi Granth, annotated and published by Sahib Singh, Stīk Bhagat Bānī (Part Second): Amritsar, Singh Brothers, 1993 (reprint), pp. 57, 68, 82, 90, 93, 103, 121, 145. The epithet 'gun-nirgun' suggests that God with attributes and without attributes is a single entity.
- 3. Ibid., pp. 63, 111, 121, 136, 145.
- 4. Ibid., pp. 59, 84, 90, 103, 111, 116, 136. The terms used are sahbā, saran and ādhār.
- 5. Ibid., pp. 57, 68. Sahib Singh points out that the 'name' in this verse is not the same as 'the name' of Ravidas. This nām is used in the context of Vaishnava bhaktī which is not the path chosen by Ravidas. In another verse the distinction between the two uses of nām comes out clearly. Ibid., p. 136.
- 6. Ibid., pp. 1, 78, 82. Ravidas uses the word 'ās' or 'āsā' to express hope for seeing God. Ibid., 145.
- 7. Ibid., p. 68, 78, 90, 116. In another verse, the philosopher's stone is clearly God. Ibid., p. 145.
- 8. Ibid., pp. 78, 93, 116, 136.
 The most formidable of the five senses appears to be the sense of touch that leads to lust. In any case, kām proves to be the undoing of Shiva (Umāpatī) and Indra (sahabhag-gāmī). Ibid., p. 116.

- 9. Ibid., pp. 68, 121,145. The ordinary state of human beings is that of plight (bipat). Ibid., p. 59.
- 10. Ibid., pp. 63, 78, 145, 163.
- 11. Ibid., pp. 63, 84, 93, 116, 121.
 The word phankhānā appears to be the popular version of the Persian fanā-khāna or khāna-i fanā, i.e., the house of destruction.
- 12. Ibid., pp. 59, 82, 90, 121, 136, 145.
- 13. Ibid., pp. 59, 63, 82, 142.
- 14. Ibid., pp. 82, 111, 163.
 Ravidas adds that the shop of falsehood has been closed by turning to God.
- 15. Ibid., p. 157.
- 16. Ibid., p. 126.
- 17. Ibid., pp. 66, 100, 126, 157.
- 18. Ibid., p. 131.
- 19. Ibid., p. 138.
- 20. Ibid., pp. 86, 100-01, 105, 107, 111, 121, 140, 145, 152.
- 21. Ibid., pp. 112-13.
- 22. Ibid., pp. 66, 80, 88, 96, 98, 136.
 Related to the idea of direct vision of God is Ravidas's idea that bhaktī is superior to the knowledge of the learned, or whatever is found in thirty-four letters. Ibid., p. 100.
- 23. Ibid., p. 119. Ravidas uses the term 'gat' for state or condition in some other verses also. Ibid., pp. 90, 93.
- 24. Ibid., pp. 66, 80, 86, 98, 111, 126.
- 25. Ibid., p. 88.
- 26. Ibid., p. 105.
- 27. Ibid., p. 152.
- 28. Ibid., p. 124.
- 29. Ibid., pp. 66, 86, 88.
- Ibid., pp. 66, 80, 96, 112-13, 155, 157, 182.
 Sahib Singh equates the sādhū of this verse with 'gurū'. Ibid., p. 153.
- 31. Ibid., p. 128.
- 32. Ibid., pp. 61, 106, 155, 158.

- 33. Ibid., p. 138
- 34. Ibid., pp. 86, 98, 155, 158.

 Another comparison postulated by Ravidas in this context is that of the paper made from the $t\bar{a}r$ tree: people bow to it when sacred verses are written on it.
- 35. Ibid., pp. 60-1.
- 36. Ibid., p. 133. Callewaert and Friedlander come to the conclusion that Ravidas 'came into conflict with the Brahmans of Banaras'. The Life and Works of Raidas, pp. 34,78.
- 37. Callewaert and Friedlander, Ibid., pp. 82-7.
- 38. Ibid., pp. 87-91.
- 39. Ibid., pp. 91-4.
- 40. Ibid., pp. 94-8.
- 41. Ibid., pp. 99-104.
- 42. Ibid., pp. 98-9.
- 43. Ibid., pp. 102-4.
- 44. Ibid., p. 81.
- 45. John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, Songs of the Saints of India, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988 (paperback), p. 17.
- 46. Hawley and Juergensmeyer refer to the Begampura verse as bordering 'on being genuinely political', and as a comment on the political institutions which at this time were Muslim. Ibid., p. 182.
- 47. 'If one means by Hinduism the religious system whose central rituals are entrusted to Brahmins, whose central institutions are a set of reciprocal but unequal social relationships, and whose guiding ideas set forth what life should be within this hierarchically variegated world and how it may rightly be transcended, then Ravidas was not really a Hindu'. Ibid., p. 10.
- 48. The later tradition visualizes women followers of Ravidas. A woman of the royal family of Chittor is said to have become a disciple of Ravidas. Callewaert and Friedlander, The Life and Works of Raidas, pp. 34, 78.
- 49. Callewaert and Friedlander, The Life and Works of Raidas, p. 28.

- 50. Mark Juergensmeyer. 'Bhagat Ravi Das: A Symbol of Lower Caste Pride'. Studies in Sikhism and Comparative Religion. Vol. VIII, No. 1, p. 34.
- 51. Ibid., p. 35.
- 52. Sir Denzil Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes*, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 1970 (rpt.).
- 53. Mark Juergensmeyer, 'Bhagat Ravi Das', p. 34. The recent efforts to revive Ravidas indicate the absence of any Ravidas Panth earlier. Hawley and Juergensmeyer, Songs of the Saints of India, pp. 18-23.



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4

DADU AND DADU-PANTHIS

The first serious notice of Dadu and the Dadu-Panthis was taken by John Traill, a missionary of the Church of Scotland in Jaipur, who could converse with Dadu-Panthis and observe their practices. He talks of Dadu's birth in the home of a Brahman. Early in his life, Dadu came under the influence of Kabir and Nanak, the two most important protagonists of 'Reformation of Hinduism' in northern India. He visited Delhi to have an interview with Akbar. He died at Naraina, leaving 152 disciples to continue his work. For making these statements, Traill was relying on tradition current among the Dadu-Panthis.

Traill has something to say about the Dadu-Panth. Fifty two of his original disciples opened Daduvārās (Dadudwārās), mainly in Rajasthan. Some of these seats had almost passed away but some had prospered in terms of 'wealth and learning'. Dadu's successors lived at Naraina as the head of all Dadu-Panthis who contributed something to keep up the dignity of their head. A great gathering was held there annually. A house of Dadu's followers flourished at Amber, and there was a monument to Dadu at Sambhar where his 'coat and sandals' were worshipped as relics.

In the early twentieth century the Dadu-Panthis were divided into laymen and monks. There were various stages of affiliation. In some cases the connection became very slender: a dole to a begging monk was sufficient to maintain the link. The monks generally came from 'the better castes'; they devoted themselves to a religious life, and to teaching the Bānī. A number of Dadu-Panthis practised medicine, agriculture money-lending, and bearing

arms. They had produced a good deal of 'protestant literature' in the common tongue. Traill noticed five major divisions of the Dadu-Panthis: the khālsās, with their seat at Naraina; the nāgās (monk soldiers), with their camps near the Jaipur borders and their headquarters at Jaipur; the utrādhīs in the British Punjab; the virakkat who moved from place to place with their disciples; and the khākīs who were wandering ascetics. Traill observed that 'Hinduism' in a modified form had found its way among the Dadu-Panthis. Many of them were Vedantists, and many of them used the rosary; they worshipped the Bānī as an idol, and prostrated themselves before the sandals and old clothes of Dadu.

From the Bānī of Dadu it appeared to Orr that he rejected much that was 'new and false in Hinduism'. He rejected the Vedas. the Vedantic philosophy, ritualism and formalism, priesthood. idolatry, the use of rosary, pilgrimages and ceremonial ablutions. and caste and caste marks. Dadu held the view that Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma were only men who had been canonized, that matter or māyā was not evil in itself, and that all possible 're-births' happen in man's one life on earth. Dadu repeated again and again that he was not a Hindu, indicating a later growth of the 'Dadu legend'. The year of his birth, 1544, was probably correct; his followers could not be mistaken about his death in 1603. His intimate association with Sambhar, Amber, and Naraina was fully established. The detailed itinerary given by Jan Gopal may also be accepted on the whole as authentic on the strength of the local tradition. Nevertheless, the current Dādū Janmalīlā differed from the original poem of Jan Gopal in many important respects, and contained 'a large number of quite obvious and highly significant interpolations'. A comparison with the early manuscripts revealed that the text was deliberately amended in several places.2

The original poem opens simply with the account of Dadu's birth in the home of a cotton-carder (dhuniyā). In the current Janmalīlā however, the child is found floating downstream in a basket to be picked up by Lodi Ram, a merchant of Ahmadabad. Here, Dadu's birth in the home of a Muslim cotton-carder is sought

to be concealed. In the original poem, the birth of Dadu's four children at Sambhar is related as a normal domestic event. In the current Janmalīlā, however, Dadu gives his wife two cloves and two peppercorns to eat, with the promise that she would become the mother of four children. Here, Dadu's celibacy is sought to be preserved. The story of his wife's death at Amber, whose dead body was cast out in the jungle, is passed over in silence in the current Janmalīlā. This story indicated the rejection of both cremation and burial by Dadu. The story of Dadu's visit to Sikri becomes full of miracles and portents in the current Janmalīlā and 'all the semblance of truth is lost'.3

The earliest known notice of Dadu in a non-Dadu-Panthi source, the *Dabistān-i Mazāhib*, a work of the mid-seventeenth century, sets the record right:

One sect is that of the Dadupanthis. Dadu was by birth a naddaf (cotton-carder) and lived at Naraina, one of the towns of Marwar. He adopted the ascetic life in the time of the Emperor Akbar, and made many disciples. He forbade the practice of idolatry among his followers. He also prohibited the eating of flesh, and sought to avoid causing pain to any living creature. He did not require the abandonment of secular pursuits, nor forbid marriage. People were left free to remain celibate or to marry, to withdraw from the world's business or engage in it as they saw fit, and his disciples embraced both classes. When a member of the sect dies, there custom is to place him on a bed and carry him out to the jungle. They say it is good that the wild animals should feed upon him and satisfy their hunger.

The summary given of Dadu's teachings suggests acquaintance with the written Bānī of Dadu.4

Orr takes up four points for further discussion: Dadu's birthplace, his parentage, his religious teacher, and his interview with Akbar. On the first, he comes to the conclusion that the emigration of Dadu's parents from Gujarat to Rajputana, either before his birth or in his early childhood is 'well within the bounds

of probability'. Orr points out that both Sundar Das and Rajab, two of the most important disciples of Dadu, refer to him as a cotton-carder. His earliest known associations are with Sambhar. On the second point, Orr is quite positive that Dadu's father was a Muslim cotton-carder. Apart from explicit statements in the $D\bar{a}d\bar{u}$ Janmalīlā about his being a cotton-carder, his disciples felt no embarrassment about the fact of his Muslim birth. The idea of Dadu being a Brahman, or even Hindu, did not enter the minds of the first generation of his followers. Orr identifies 'Buddhan' of the Janmalīlā with Shaikh Buddhan of the Qadiri order, the son of Qazi Ismail of Sambhar and a disciple of Shaikh Fateh Muhammad. The descendants of Qazi Ismail remained closely linked with Dadu's shrine at Sambhar till the early 1930s, indicating 'a real historical connection between Dadu and Shaikh Buddhan'. About Dadu's interview with Akbar, Orr remarks that the story was written by a person well acquainted with the situation in Fatehpur Sikri in 1585. The 'simple straightforward narrative' has 'an air of veracity which it is difficult to escape'.5

The Dādū Janmalīlā of Jan Gopal has been edited and translated by Winand M. Callewaert on the basis of the earliest known manuscripts which he has examined in the light of other early evidence on the life of Dadu. He reinforces Orr's impression: 'Very soon in the history of the pantha efforts were made to "explain" Dadu's association with the low caste of dhuniya's and with Muslims, or to emphasize his celibacy'. Callewaert comes to the conclusion that Jan Gopal's Dādū Janmalīlā was 'changed and enlarged at a very early stage after its composition'. Most of the interpolated details are 'encomiastic and miraculous'. Later biographies add only more details which grew out of the oral tradition and which conform to the archetype for the behaviour of Sants, involving the performance of miracles to impress their audiences. There is a tendency towards 'Brahmanization': Dadu's later disciples try to hide his possible Muslim origin and Muslim teacher and invent an explanation for his connection with the cotton-carders (dhuniyās). Callewaert goes on to point out that the basis for English writings, and for recent Hindi writings on the subject of Dadu and the Dadu-Panth is H.H. Wilson's article of 1828. 'Relying mainly on informants in Benares, Wilson started the tradition of calling Dadu a disciple in the lineage of Ramanand and Kabir'.⁶

III

Towards the end of $D\bar{a}d\bar{u}$ Janmalīlā, Jan Gopal states that it was impossible to depict the whole wondrous manifestation of Dadu but what he had written could bring spiritual knowledge and mundane rewards to the listener. Dadu, the foremost sant, was the true $gur\bar{u}$. His life was meant to portray his teachings as much as to narrate the events of his life. The two interwoven make $D\bar{a}d\bar{u}$ Janmalīlā the earliest presentation of his mission and the formation of his Panth.

Born in Ahmadabad in 1544, Dadu brought joy to 'the house of the cotton-carder' as if the moon of $d\bar{u}j$ (second night) had appeared. He was eleven years old when Baba Buddha appeared and tested the discernment of all the children who were playing with him. Pleased with Dadu the old man put a sweet $p\bar{a}n$ roll in his mouth, giving him 'everlasting knowledge of Ram'. 'The child did not grasp what was happening'. For seven years then he did different works before 'Hari appeared to him'. Dadu began to travel on the true path. He carded cotton, ate, and gave others to eat. 'He gave without asking anything and he liked to serve his own servants'. He seemed to be the incarnation of Kabir.8

In 1573 Dadu came to Sambhar, full of love but suffering virah. He was yearning for the Supreme Brahma. He meditated deeply on the name. He met the blessed Kabir in samādhī and discussed his doubts; he became aware of the divine reality. He continually sang Kabir's poems and became 'his equal in word and deed'; he became an authority on divine reality. At Sambhar, thus, he seems to have made his own discovery of the truth. He ignored all Muslim customs and abandoned Hindu practices. He rejected worship of gods in temples, pilgrimages and fasts; he did

not visit holy persons or shrines. Both Hindus and Turks began to criticize him but he had a ready answer for their leaders. Ultimately, they all gave up. 'Hari was his protector, so what could they do'? Dadu's elder son, Garib Das, was born at Sambhar in 1575; the second son, Maskin, was born before the two daughters, Hawa and Bai. Were they born in the human way or 'came through gift'? Jan Gopal was not sure.9

Opposition to Dadu did not cease. The Brahmans and Banias deliberated among themselves and took the matter to the panchāyat. The sikdar wrote the order that anybody going to Dadu would have to pay Rs. 5 as fine. But the order changed to the effect that anybody going to Dadu should take Rs. 5 with him. From this point onwards, Dadu became famous. A Qāzī came from Ajmer with the Qur'an in his hand and said to Dadu, 'why have you upturned the true path? A Muslim lives by the Divine Word, if a person calls on Ram he is an infidel'. Dadu told the Qazī that Muslims and Hindus were equally zealous about their convictions; no one knew what was agreeable to God. But the killing of creatures could not be acceptable to God. The Qāzī became furious and hit Dadu. Not even trying to protect himself, Dadu said: 'My body is very hard and your hand will go on aching'. Three months later the Qāzī died in great pain, and full of repentance. A Qāzī in Sambhar resolved to punish Dadu for spreading heresy. The truth of religion (dīn) could remain firm only if frauds and rogues like Dadu disappeared. The Qāzī's house began to burn and he was frightened, and left Dadu in peace. Muslims were offended when they saw Dadu singing hymns inside a temple. A crowd gathered and carried him away to the commander-in-chief. Dadu was thrown into a dungeon. But he appeared to all 'inside and outside the prison'. The commander sought forgiveness. 'You are not to blame', said Dadu, 'whatever the creator orders pleases me'. Dadu's renown spread everywhere and devotees came to see him. Then the issue of dress arose and Dadu was not pleased. 'How can I please the Muslims', he said, 'and what should I wear for

the Hindus?' Dadu decided to go to Amber as a good place for meditation.¹⁰

When Dadu reached Amber, the Raja and the people were overjoyed. Crowds flocked to his darbar to hear kirtan and katha. Sādhs and sants came from all the four directions. All sorts of people came and offered gifts out of devotion. He never stopped carding cotton when even kings came to see him. Although the dhuniyā caste was considered mean, he went on carding cotton. Later, however, he began to accept 'food as alms'. When Akbar heard about Dadu he sent invitation for him, telling Raja Bhagwant Das that he was keen to meet Dadu. The Raja's messenger came to invite him but Dadu was not keen to go. 'I have no business with kings', he said. The messanger said that he would refuse to eat and drink if Dadu did not go with him. Dadu entrusted the matter to Ram and in meditation 'he was given the order to go'. He made arrangements for the continuation of his work at Amber; giving suitable instructions to his disciples: Sant Das, Damodar, Dwaraka Das and Jag Jiwan. With seven of his disciples, Dadu started for Sikri; among them were Syam Das 'Lahauri', Jagdis Das, Gun Das, and Dharma Das. Jan Gopal was at Sikri and met him on his arrival there.11

In his meeting with Abul Fazl, Birbal and a Brahman named Tulsi, Dadu ignores the greeting 'Hail to the King' because only he is hailed 'whom all the saints adore, whom moon and sun and earth and wind worship, whom gods and men praise, whom all celestial beings glorify'. Dadu could not glorify 'what is born and dies, and comes and goes'. Dadu explains his own position: 'He is our God by whom all has been created. We meditate on the name of Hari and controlling the senses we glorify Ram'. About the epithets used for God, Dadu says that 'he has no name; call him Sahib, it makes you no wiser. For our own satisfaction we give him names, according to the qualities we discover in him': dayāl (merciful), gopāl (protector of creatures), rām (who dwells in every heart), sirjanhār (creator), apār (without end), allah (who cannot be grasped), alakh (who cannot be described), rahīm

(compassionate), mohan (charmer), vyāpī (in everything). 'In that way only can we meditate on his names. He accepts the love and commitment of his devotees. He honours their true service. His presence is manifest throughout the world'. Raja Bhagwant Das and Abul Fazl enjoyed this conversation. They announced to the emperor that in Dadu they had found 'a real treasure'. 12

In Akbar's presence Dadu states that he lives where the master instructs him to live; he does not decide where to come and go. 'In fact the master brought me to your presence, nothing that he orders fails'. Dadu talked about Sambhar and Amber, where his highest Guru had become manifest. When the emperor expresses his wish to fulfil Dadu's desires, Dadu replies: 'What can you do with water, if you are not thirsty'. Akbar asks Dadu how to find the treasure. 'First destroy the physical desires', says Dadu, 'which tie you to worldly passions. Give up all hopes in the three worlds and surely Brahma will reveal his light'. Dadu goes on to explain how he came to abandon all worldly attachments. 'The creator made all living beings and he gave to each one basically the same. He gave a little food and some grains to Kings and peasants alike. People keep increasing their desires and they amazingly never find fulfilment. When a person has ten, he wants twenty, when he has twenty he wants one hundred, when he has a million, he wants a billion: as his possessions increase, they -look to him smaller and smaller'. When all these dreams vanish, you abandon all worldly desires. Akbar was highly impressed and invited Dadu for more discussions. But Dadu said he would go away and meditate on the name in solitude. The emperor was not pleased.13

Raja Bhagwant Das tells Dadu that Akbar was unhappy over Dadu's response. Dadu replies that if God is pleased with truth 'let people take it well or ill'. Raja Bhagwant Das says that Akbar was 'looked at with great respect and worshipped as a God by both Hindus and Muslims'. Dadu says, 'I worship only One and do not bow to any other. All created beings are in the power of death, only Brahma does not come and go'. Raja Bhagwant Das

showed temples, palaces and residences to Dadu but he did not take the slightest interest in them. When they entered the palace of mirrors, Dadu said it was all unreal. If that was so, said the Raja, he would give it all up and become Dadu's disciple. Dadu said, 'Just remember it is not real, do good to others and that is your asceticism'. The matter was reported to the emperor.¹⁴

In his discussions with Akbar, Dadu spoke with the firmness of Prahlad and the wisdom of Kabir. Akbar wanted to know how Dadu experienced God and gained recognition. 'It is all a matter of luck', said Dadu, 'if you see the way people get around'. There were plenty of cotton-carders in Sikri, working hard day and night, but none had experienced God. Akbar offered gold, silver and clothes, villages and districts, horses and elephants, to Dadu as a mark of his appreciation. Dadu said: 'Clothed in rags and hungry, the ascetic only gathers the richness of Hari'. Staying away from gold and women, one could enter the presence of the master. 'As long as an ascetic keeps touching wealth, he commits a grave sin'. Akbar persisted in his offer, but Dadu said: 'I would like this as your present that you treat all beings impartially. Let no being suffer and the creator will be pleased. Stay always in the presence of the master, give alms and encourage others to do the same'. Dadu then took his leave and went away. When Birbal offered cash and jewellery to Dadu he declined and said that he had no use for coins; there was no room in his mind except for Hari. 'It is the empty vessel you must fill with water, if the vessel is already full more water will spill out'. When Dadu returned, Raja Bhagwant Das felt relieved: he had been worrying day and night, hoping that Hari would protect Dadu. 15 The Sikri episode, thus, underscores Dadu's stance of independence and commitment to truth.

Dadu left Sikri with his seven disciples and reached Amber where his followers rejoiced over his safe return: 'If Ram takes care of someone, nobody can disturb him'. At Amber, a Muslim brought some cooked meat, hiding it under a piece of cloth; when he opened it there was sugar and rice instead. He was much

impressed and realized that Dadu was a vegetarian. A trader invoked Dadu's help, fearing ship-wreck. When the boat touched the bank safely he distributed half of his stock for the sake of Dadu in fulfilment of his vow. After a year, Dadu travelled to a few places. A popular festival was organized at Tonk where a large number of sants were present. Crowds lined up to see Dadu, and the wondrous festival went on for seven days to the beat of tāl and pakhāwaj. From Tonk, Dadu went to Gudhala in the company of young disciples. Gatherings were held for three days before Dadu returned to Amber. Puran Das, a mahājan in Andhi. had left worldly attachments to become immersed in Ram. Dadu used to go there for 'religious celebrations' with 'songs and praise'. A yogī of Sambhar, named Jaimal, was a joyful disciple of Dadu. He arranged celebrations for Dadu. Everywhere people sang Dadu's praises, not caring for other people's praise or scorn. They concentrated on the Almighty, while both Hindus and Turks disliked this.16

Raja Man Singh made his entry in Amber (presumably in 1589) and large crowds came to see him. Everyone met him at his residence, but Dadu stayed at home. People started slandering him, saying that he had paid no respect to the Raja. He offended others too, they said. He proclaimed that Hindus and Turks were one, that Brahmans and Baniās were equal. There was no distinction between the four castes. The Vedas were proclaimed false. Deceased women were left behind in the jungle without ritual; they were not even buried. No religion was safe anymore; both Hindus and Turks were going astray. 'Our children are encouraged to remain celibate, while the Vedas are said to be erroneous. Till the age 7 the girl is *kanyā*; till the age of 12 she is *betī*. But if unmarried at the age of 16, it is against *dharma*; at the age of 20, it is a misdeed. According to the slanderers, Dadu had brought disorder to the land, and his actions were unjustifiable.¹⁷

Raja Man Singh met Dadu and mentioned that Dadu never came to enquire about him. He did inquire about essentials, said Dadu, whenever the Almighty suggested it to him. The Raja asked

Dadu: 'Do you bury or burn the corpses?' Dadu replied with a couplet: 'The brave warrior and the sādhū adorn the open field, they need no tomb or cremation ground'. Life spent in the service of others is good and one should die at a place where 'birds and beasts can feed on you'. On the question of celibacy Dadu said that one should not impose marriage on young persons. 'Parents have little intelligence, they make terrible mistakes'. Men and women are thrust upon each other. They embrace each other and think of nothing else; they forget Hari completely; their marriage is meaningless. Brahmans and Banias are powerful but their daughters become widows at the age of seven. Why should they forever face the scorn of the world? 'this is no work of the Almighty'. Dadu goes on to say: 'I do not impose or forbid marriage, each individual should choose the nectar or the poison'. The next question was about the kind of people who became Dadu's disciples. Dadu said that he did not seek sikhs; people came on their own, like the lotus recognizing the moon, the snake smelling the sandal tree, or the moth attracted by the lamp. A boat takes across everyone who gets into it. Sants come from everywhere and King Ram takes care of them all. 'Lovely hue is produced when lime and haldī are mixed, like the meeting of two people in love'.18

There were many tall persons in his company and they were well dressed. How did Dadu provide food to his followers if he earned no money and accepted no cash? Dadu replied that Hari took care of those who lived as if they are dead, giving up all worldly hopes. Seeing that Raja Man Singh was favourably inclined towards Dadu, the faces of the Brahmans fell. They made no secret of their feeling that Dadu was 'a real nuisance to them'. They could not stomach the fact that people went to Dadu to call on Ram, and nobody came to their rituals. 'If Your Majesty goes on to support Dadu', they said to Raja Man Singh, 'everyone will join his sect'. Faced with a dilemma, the Raja asked Dadu how long he had stayed in Amber. Dadu said that the creator had given him protection for fourteen years. The Raja realized that he had

offended Dadu and felt embarrassed. But Dadu reassured him: 'Do not be afraid, King, through you Ram has spoken to me. Hari is the medium between you and me, there is no question here of good or bad statement'. He went home and distributed everything he had. Accompanied by his devoted bairāgīs, he started his wanderings. As in Sambhar so in Amber, there was criticism and opposition, and Dadu chose to leave.

Jan Gopal mentions about forty places visited by Dadu in Rajasthan in about twelve years. At some of these places he stayed only for a few days; at others, for a few weeks or a few months; only at Kalyanpur his stay appears to have extended at times for a year or two. Jan Gopal also mentions more than one hundred important disciples of Dadu who either accompanied him or lived in various places. Dadu's reputation was at its height during these years which, probably, proved to be the most important years of his life in terms of his influence. The detail provided by Jan Gopal enables us to have some idea of the nature of Dadu's activity during these years.

Dadu halted in Bhurbhura for three months along with his disciples. In Kalyanpur he stayed for a year on the invitation of Pitha who lived like an ascetic. 'He was very courageous in his devotion and did not bother about the comments of people'. Dadu was invited to Khandaya by Madhav Das who had reached the ecstasy of love with the singing of hymns. In Edva, great devotion was shown to Dadu by Narbad who had left a royal post to sing the praises of God. Kisan Singh Rathor became an accepted disciple of Dadu. Celebrations were organized in Telana for Dadu in which was present the cotton-carder Sant Das of Rewat, a good ascetic. The Rathor noble Man Singh of Bhavadi became a truthful sikh of Dadu. Raghav Das Chauhan of Tosin was admitted as a disciple. The brothers Prithiraj and Lakhu developed real love for Dadu; he stayed in their house for a few days; and they served him as if he were God.²⁰

The Rao of Bhuratiya near Bikaner heard that Dadu was in the area and thought of inviting him. He wanted to know Dadu's

dharma, how he lived, what he did, and what he preached. 'The name of Ram is my sect', said Dadu, 'my way of living is control of the senses, for my deeds watch my disciples; their goal is to be immersed in Ram'. The Rao remarked that they did not 'recite any text'. Dadu said that this did not mean they had 'no wisdom'. Then Garib Das and Rajab joined Dadu to face a mad elephant. The Rao was amazed at their courage and their faith. 'The elephant stood motionless as if he was painted in a picture'. On the day following, the Rao called Dadu again and asked about 'the rosary and sectarian marks'. The Rao was keen to replace his 'wooden rosary' with one of gold. Dadu said, 'My sectarian mark is the rosary of the mind which the Guru gave. You do not need a rosary of wood or gold, if Ram is in your heart'. The Rao was willing to build a monastery for Dadu who told his disciples about the offer. They discussed the matter and decided that 'Sants should not be totally dependent on others'. When the Raja called Dadu a few days later, Dadu spoke his mind clearly: 'we will follow the life Ram appoints for us, not concerned with the favours of Kings or people. They call on you, showing enthusiasm, but later on their moods change'.21

Dadu returned to the monastery (Kalyanpur?). Two years later he was invited to the Marwar region. Wherever he went, people experienced joy. After about a year, Lad Khan joined him. Ishwar Kacchvaha, who lived in Naulasa, was a brave disciple; he had given up sexual relations with his wife and they lived together like brother and sister; he strictly observed the vows. At Ghatra, Lad Khan served Dadu for a couple of days; celebrations were held there with great devotion. On his way to Kardauli Dadu visited Sahipur where he had the trustworthy disciple Sah Tilok; he walked a mile to receive Dadu; he arranged plenty of food and found happiness in kathā and kīrtan. When Dadu left in the morning, Sah Tilok was put in charge of the equipment that had arrived the day before: blankets, cots and shawls, mattresses and carpets, all together. At Kardauli, Dadu gave joy to Prag Das, a merchant, who had become an excellent disciple. Another

mahājan, Gopal Das invited Dadu to Didana; he showed great zeal in whatever he did, pleasing everyone with feelings of devotion; religious celebrations were held for five days before Dadu left in the company of Gopal Joshi of Nagaur. In Rodhu, Dadu stayed with the mahājan Soran, and then returned to the monastery.²²

Dadu stayed at the monastery for three months and then returned to Marwar. His worthy disciple Rajab was full of wisdom, virtue and courage. He had the temperament of an ascetic right from birth; after meeting Dadu he gave up the world totally. He decided to organize a great festival and urged Dadu repeatedly to come. Dadu agreed. On his way, he stopped at Alhanyavas to meet some of his outstanding followers. In Karu lived Ghadasi, a man with the temper of a real ascetic; his people (kutumbh) held a great festival, spending all they possessed. When Dadu arrived in Kevalpur, a great festival of religious devotion was celebrated for four days to the great joy of Dadu. At the invitation of the devotee Taku, Dadu went to Padu. Sanga, Jaswant, Jagannath. and Charan Darsa asked Dadu questions about his doctrine. When a question was raised about avtārs, Dadu said: 'Whatever has a beginning will also have an end. The Almighty is devoid of duality. Meditate on this in your mind'. According to Dadu, Brahma is not created; he is not bound to a body; he is unmoving, complete and undivided; he does not go around dancing in this world.²³

In Palari, Dadu lived in the house of Kanhar Das, the good sevak who had left all illusion and surrendered to Dadu to find truth in his presence. In Idwa lived Dujan sādh, an ascetic who was the essence of virtue; he was the rasoīdār of his gurū, Dadu. There were several other important disciples; Dadu gave joy to all, and all the sants sang his praises. The devotees of the Dhundhahar region begged Dadu to come. Dadu said: 'those ascetic devotees come first, who love the highest Guru' (param gurū). Dadu left some devotees in the duārā and travelled with others. Jan Gopal names about forty of them and says that their numbers increased everyday 'as the rivers swell during the monsoon'. He goes on to add that he had named only the close disciples (ang

sevak) of Dadu 'but there are innumerable others'. 'Remarkable, religious celebration lasting for eight days, were held in Sambhar, with appropriate service to Svamiji'. Fine celebrations were held by Bakhana at Naraina, and Udhav organized religious celebrations at Bharaina. Taulha invited Dadu to Punyana and organized appropriate celebrations. 'With great submission he performed arti to Svamiji, who gave him the gift of devotion'. Dadu was invited to Ratanpur where the worthy devotee Udhav organized a suitable festival for four days.²⁴

Kanakvati, the queen, organized a fine festival for Dadu at Amber and came to see him personally. She donated clothes, presents and sweets, but Dadu distributed everything, and ate nothing. Accompanied by the servants of the queen, Dadu arrived in Karanjali without prior notice. 'He gave them so much that it was like experiencing liberation in life'. Among the zealous followers of the gurū was Biram who had given up all sexual relationships; he came to touch Dadu's feet and invited everybody to Sanganer. Alongwith half a dozen devoted disciples of Dadu, he organized a fine festival for seven days. Religious celebrations were organized for three days by Kanha Das and his sister. Nizam and Nagar, who lived in a lonely hut, were visited by Dadu. 'They performed the arti to Svamiji and put the dust of his feet on their foreheads'. Another celebration was organized by Jan Gopal and Jamunabai, with the help of several other disciples of Dadu. The ascetic and musician Haridas, who sang about Hari's qualities with an enlightened mind, was there; there was also the ascetic Bhagwan Das who had given up the world as māyā. At Kalyanpatan, Lakha and Narhari performed āratī with great devotion and organized fine celebrations for two days. All kinds of clothes were given as presents. In Andhi lived the worthy Damodar who had increased his love through earnest devotion; he organized religious celebrations and a great festival. At Ramhari, a fine festival of devotion and religious celebrations was organized, praising Dadu.25

Chaturbhuj, the son of a nobleman, came to see 'Guru Dadu' whose fame was spreading to the east. Jan Gopal names over a

dozen disciples among whom was Pipa who followed 'the rules laid down by the guru', and Dharam Das who listened to 'the guru's sermons'. Big crowd of Dadu's devotees gathered when local celebrations were going on in Morda. On his arrival, Dadu was praised in various ways; people were happy to see him and experienced bliss and joy; $\bar{a}ratI$ was performed and all were in ecstasy. 'Men and women were dancing and singing and increased their love for the Supreme Lord'. Dadu returned to Kalyanpur and stayed there for a year.²⁶

In 1602, the master gave Dadu the sign that he would leave this world. Dadu searched his mind for the place of rest, a pleasant village near a lake. Narain Das, the eldest son of the chieftain Jagmal, reached Naraina where Dadu had been brought by his brother Amara. Kathā, kīrtan and goshtī were organized. The Raja was satisfied and 'ignored the Brahmans', saying that he was fortunate to have found such a treasure. 'Anyone slandering him will have to face Ram's mercy'. A monastery (duāro) was built on the bank of a small lake with a garden at the back, close to the waters. Saints came from everywhere, 'both householders and ascetics'; they performed services 'out of devotion for Hari and love for the guru'. In May 1603, Dadu went into a state of deep meditation. Later, he took bath and ate. Then he went to sit in a lonely place and the Blessed One gave him three commands. At the third command, Dadu left his body to meet God. As Dadu had ordered, his close disciples took his body to the holy hill in Bharaina, anointing it with saffron and sandal-paste. The sants were grieving. People came to see; they found only Dadu's clothes. There was no other sign of him. His body and soul were 'immersed in light, as water is in water'.27

Garib Das organized everything well after Dadu's death, and took great care to maintain everything as it had been. He collected all provisions in abundance: rice, lentils, wheat, ghee, flour and sugar. Some took uncooked rice while others had cooked food. The celebrations lasted for a full month. 'All supplies contributed to the celebrations were donated by the homes'. Great quantities

of phirn were served because it was Dadu's favourite sweet. The singing went on day and night. All Sants were given clothes, thin cloth for filtering water, and a loin-cloth. Garib Das made no distinction between outsiders and followers, continuously distributing dried coconuts, dates, clovers and sweets. The sants anointed Garib Das as his successor, and gave him the seat of the Guru. Garib Das began to be considered as equal of Svamiji. 28

The Dādū Janmalīlā, thus, provides extremely useful information. It refers to Dadu's early search for truth and the inspiration he derived from Kabir and his works. At Sambhar, Dadu did not identify himself with Hindus or Muslims; he did not appreciate their traditional beliefs and practices; he was not willing to adopt a visibly Muslim or a Hindu garb; he did not accept the authority of their scriptures; and he did not approve of violence of life. He was opposed by the representatives of traditional systems, both Hindu and Muslim, and he accepted their opposition as God's will. He was popular among the people. Nevertheless, he moved to Amber. His darbar became known for kirtan and kathā. A kind of organization was developing at Amber for the instruction of visitors and the maintenance of disciples. In due course he began to accept food as alms, and then other gifts. But he was not prepared to accept any grant from Akbar. Dadu was unwilling to recognize a master above God, the sole object of his devotion. No created being could be equated with the creator. Meditation on God, control of senses, and the glorification of Ram were the essential features of Dadu's path. He favoured renunciation of māyā. The epithets used for One God referred to his attributes; an increasing awareness of his attributes meant an increasing understanding of God. He had no name because all the names put together did not exhaust his attributes. The Name refers therefore to the nameless one. His presence is manifest throughout the world. Dadu tried to live and move in accordance with God's will. Renunciation of worldly desires and meditation on the name were the reverse and obverse of the same spiritual coin. Those in power should do good to others; they should treat all human beings impartially; they should be charitable to the poor. Dadu's stance of independence was a measure of his commitment to God.

Dadu's reputation began to soar. Devotees flocked to Amber. and disciples living at other places began to invite him to 'religious celebrations' marked by devotional singing and religious sermons. The increasing popularity of Dadu was liked neither by Brahmans nor by mullas who looked upon Dadu and his followers as a threat to their position in the traditional order. Raja Man Singh tried to intervene. The points at issue were Dadu's attitude towards Hindus and Muslims, their scriptures, and their rituals, and his attitude towards caste and gender. Dadu's path was open to all castes. and even the outcastes; he was not in favour of early marriage; and he was sympathetic to widows. Not to offend the upholders of the traditional order, Raja Man Singh hinted that Dadu had overstayed in Amber. Dadu left Amber but he had disciples and admirers now at many places in Rajasthan and he began to undertake journeys to different places from his duār at Kalyanpur. Religious celebrations and festivals were organized, sermons were delivered, and Dadu was treated with love and devotion as the gurū. By now, Dadu's own Bānī was used for religious worship. He and his followers did not use any sectarian marks, or even a rosary. Dadu rejected the idea of incarnation. He and his followers were not willing to depend upon the state. Contributions in cash and kind came from the followers who came from a wide range of social background and occupations: rulers, nobles, Brahmans, Rajputs, kayasthas, merchants and traders, artisans and craftsmen, cultivators and landless labourers. There were Hindus and Muslims, ascetics and householders, and there were some women among the devoted lay followers. Dadu encouraged celibacy but he was not opposed to the life of a householder. What mattered, essentially, was dedication to God. Organization was needed for regularizing religious activity, which in turn required material resources. There are signs of both in Dadu's lifetime. Dadu did not nominate a successor but his elder son Garib Das was treated as his successor at Naraina by his followers. A Panth had come into existence,

with its headquarters at Naraina and a single person recognized as its head. Before we take up the development of the panth during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we may turn to the Bānī of Dadu for a better understanding of his ideas and attitudes.

IV

Printed editions of Dadu's Bāṇī began to appear in the opening decade of the twentieth century. The scholarly edition of Rai Sahib Pandit Chandrika Prasad Tripathi, printed at Ajmer in 1907, with critical and expository notes, glossary and index, won general acceptance as the standard text. It was based on five manuscripts. The oldest of these was dated 1779. However, when Orr compared this text with a manuscript of 1661, he got the impression that there were no important variations. The Bani of Dadu appeared to have assumed its present shape within half a century of his death, or even earlier. His utterances were recorded by some of his disciples, and committed to memory by many. The names of Rajab, Tila, Mohan Daftari, Jagannath and Sant Das are specifically mentioned in this connection. The Ajmer text contains nearly 450 hymns (padas or shabdas) and about 2,500 sākhīs.29 The Dādūdayāl Granthāvalī, edited later by P. Chaturvedi, contains 443 padas and 2,453 sākhīs.30 More recently, scholars have taken interest in the Panchvānī and Sarvangī manuscripts of the seventeenth century, either because of their interest in Dadu or in Kabir, Raidas and other 'Sants'.31 However, no new edition of Dadu's Bāṇī has come out recently.

The Sarvangī of Rajab and the Sarvangī of Gopal Das have been edited by Winand M. Callewaert as the earliest known records of Dadu's Bānī. The Sarvangī of Gopal Das contains 401 padas and 1,452 $s\bar{a}kh\bar{l}s$ of Dadu. However, it was based on sources 'very different' from those of Rajab, the two works being independent products of compilation, differing 'both in the amount and the choice of the material and in the way it has been arranged'. In other words, the total number of padas and $s\bar{a}kh\bar{l}s$ of Dadu was larger than what we find in the Sarvangī of Gopal Das. Both Rajab

and Gopal Das divided their material into themes or chapters (angas). In the Ajmer text, the $s\bar{a}kh\bar{l}s$ of Dadu are divided into 37 chapters, with the number of $s\bar{a}kh\bar{l}s$ ranging from ten to two hundred in each. The angas, and the $s\bar{a}kh\bar{l}s$ in each anga, are numbered. The hymns (shabdas) are arranged according to $r\bar{a}gs$ and numbered consecutively from first to last. A considerable number of the shabdas and $s\bar{a}kh\bar{l}s$ of Dadu are given by Orr in English translation. 33

It has been suggested that the tradition of organizing Bani in terms of thematic categories 'may have had its origin in the Dadu-panth'. In any case, Rajab, who developed this mode of compilation most systematically, divided the dohās (sākhīs) of Dadu into 37 angas, while his own dohās were divided into as many as 193 categories. This kind of classification is found in both the Sarvangī and Panchvānī manuscripts.34 There are ten major thematic headings which are common to the earliest known Dadu-Panthi texts and the popular editions: the greatness of the True Guru (satgur mahimā), separation (biraha), the greatness of Sants (sādh mahimā), the fellowship of Sants (satsang), upplication (binatī), heroism (sūrātan), admonition (chetāvanī), illusion $(m\bar{a}y\bar{a})$, the mind (man), and faith $(bes\bar{a}s)$. There are eleven other themes common to the early Dadu-Panthi manuscripts: remembrance, recognition of the beloved, the experience of spiritual knowledge, grasping the essence, the impartial inner path, the root of immortality, right thinking, the faithful wife, slander, death, and the omnipotence of God.35 These thematic categories surel indicate the importance given to certain key ideas and attitudes by the Dadu-Panthis. However, for a meaningful perspective on Dadu's idea and attitudes, it is not necessary, or even helpful, to talk in terms of these themes.

We may start with Dadu's attitude towards the contemporary systems of religious belief and practice. As cotton-carder, even though a Muslim, he could not have been influenced much by the beliefs and practices of Islamic orthodoxy. However, he is said to have come into contact with a Sūfī shaikh. Therefore, his attitude

towards Islam can be of special interest. The true believer (momin), according to Dadu, is he whose heart is soft like wax (mom), who knows God and does no violence. Dadu tells the mullā not to slay the innocent. To spare life is to perform five daily prayers; to 'slay' anger and self-regard is of real merit; people skilled in the slaughter of others are unable to slay their 'self'. By eating flesh they think they have become 'believers'. Such Musalmans are compared by Dadu to tigers and lions. 'They cut throats and recite the creeds: such is this miserable cult'. They offer prayers but they have no sincere faith. Dadu asks the mullā to put away the thought of the sword: 'All are made in the image of the Most High'. The light of Allah is of his own essence; the souls of men shine by his light. In these verses Dadu looks upon formalistic and ritualistic worship as futile and rejects the idea of force or compulsion.

Dadu uses the epithets Allah, Khudā, Ilāhī, Rahīm, Karīm, Mālik, Sāhib, Rāziq, Ghanī, and Sultan for God. Allah is present within the heart. The body is the mosque, the five senses are the congregation, the heart is the mulla and the imam; there, one should prostrate oneself before the ineffable Allah. Real worship is to take the name of the compassionate, with the whole body as the rosary. The real fast is to acknowledge only one God. One should meditate on Allah all the eight watches of day and night. The letter alif of one Allah is enough; he who reads it masters all the learning of the Qu'ran and other sacred books. Dadu's concern for the inner feeling of devotion to a personal God, as against formalistic and ritualistic worship, comes out clearly in this verse. He appears to favour the idea of remembrance in silence, like the Sūfī practice of zikr-i khafī. There is no doubt that he has much closer affinity with the Islam of the Sūfīs than with the Islam of the mullā and the qāzī. One view of the soul in Dadu's Bāṇī keeps him close to the Islamic position: 'The soul's eighty-four lacs of re-births take place within the material body; it passes through several births every day, but none knows it'. The changing qualities of the soul are its 'incarnations'. When this 'transmigration' of the heart ceases, then is it taken up with God. This long shabda leaves no doubt that Dadu is talking of a single birth, and not of transmigration. At another place, he gives expression to a Sūfi idea in terms which suggest that he had internalized the idea. God has devised a wondrous play in which he remains concealed: planting desire in the soul, He has set it a-wandering; he has not disclosed himself to his lovers; he remains hidden. This idea of the hidden treasure is interwoven with the concept of māyā which serves as the veil. Dadu's ideas of love, separation and union remain close to the Sūfī ideas of love, separation and union. Similarly, the ideas of trust and acceptance of God's will show his affinity with Sūfism. Dadu's idea of creation is also close to the Islamic idea of creation. God's power and majesty as well as the emphasis on unity (tauhīd) are suggestive of Dadu's affinity with Sūfī Islam. Repentance from sin, which is forcefully hammered by Dadu, again takes him close to the Sūfis. Nevertheless, if Dadu was a 'Muslim', there is no point in talking of Islamic influences on him. It is more to the point that he did not identify himself with Muslims.37

This does not mean, however, that Dadu identified himself with the upholders of the 'Hindu' systems of religious belief and practice. He rejected the idea of incarnation, and was opposed to idol worship. People fashion an image of stone and call it the creator; sunk in error, they do not know the truth. For each true seeker there are many learned pandits and there are countless others in different garbs. The Brahmans are called the sons of Brahma but their minds are devoid of discernment; they expound sacred scriptures for others but within them dance evil spirits. People lave the stone and drink water; living souls worship dead stones; they become like the object they worship. Rosaries and sectarian marks are of no avail; Dadu has nothing to do with them; he has no concern with any sect or mode of dress. Dadu wants to know if there is any merit in singing and dancing, bathing at sacred places, having the head shaven, wearing matted hair, roaming in the forests, observing a vow of silence, or practising

austerities. The thirty-three crores of gods are all created beings, including Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. To study the Vedas is a waste of time. The shakta is denounced as one who 'drinks the poison of sensual 'pleasures'; wisdom departs in his company. The gurū draws the milk and drinks: the disciple is his goat or cow; he takes good care of his stock because he makes his living by it. Dadu appreciates only one category of people: the sādhs and sants. He praises Kabir in particular. Very dear to him is the true word of Kabir; to hear it is pure bliss. Kabir was a true hero in this age of darkness: he vanquished the hostile army of passions. It was not easy to follow Kabir's path. Dadu mentions Namdev and Raidas too, as having found the way to liberation.³⁸

Dadu identified himself neither with Hindus nor with Muslims. One says 'swāmī' and the other 'shaikh': none grasps the mystery of this world. One speaks of 'Ram' and the other of 'Allah': they understand neither Ram nor Allah. One favours the Hindu and the other favours the Musalman: they have no knowledge of what a Hindu or a Musalman is. Dadu says: 'No Hindu am I, nor yet a Musalman. I follow none of the Six Systems'. Dadu belongs to 'neither faction'; he is a devotee of Allah-Ram. The Vedas and the Qu'rān do not lead to the dwelling-place of Niranjan. Many had wasted their lives blackening paper, producing Vedas and Purānas. The judge did not know justice though he had the book in his hand, and pored over its pages. The Hindu and the Muslim were both in error. They did not realize that they were alike, as brothers, 'the offsprings of one womb'. There is no Father but God, both Ram and Rahim, Keshava and Karim. Allah, Ram and Hari stand equated in a single verse. In every man is one spirit, be he Hindu or Musalman. Dadu does not regard Hindu and Turk as two. 'There is one lord over all: I behold no other'.39

The multiplicity of epithets used for God underscores his oneness: Parameshvar, Allah, Paramātma, Khudā, Swāmī, Sāhib, Sāīn, Mālik, Dayāl, Rahīm, Brahma, Bhagwan, Hari, Govind, Madhava, Ram. It is impossible to read the Bāṇī of Dadu without coming upon the unity of God almost everywhere. Occasionally,

the oneness of God is explicitly stated. 'The Jewel is one'. 'I have made diligent quest: truly there is no second'. 'He fashioned the many from one'. True is 'the One Ineffable'. 'I have searched the three worlds, and see none besides Hari'. 'There is no second'. As we noticed earlier, all we need is to learn is the first letter of Allah which in Arabic has the shape of the numeral one. 'He who reads the letter alif of the one Allah', 'has mastered all the learning of the Qu'rān and other sacred books'.⁴⁰

The four Vedas praise God but 'know not the secret of neti neti'. If you give any name to 'nothingness', it would turn out to be wrong. Nothing can be known of God in his absolute state. 'Neither is he dead, nor lives, nor does he come and go. He sleeps not, he wakes not, nor does he hunger and eat. With him is neither silence nor sleep, with him is no "I" or "thou". No self, no other: there is neither one nor two'. He is without attributes (nirgun) and without stain (niranjan). He is immutable and indestructible. He is deathless and ineffable. The uncreated Brahma 'knows neither increase nor decrease; he is perfect, immovable, eternally the same; he comes not 'to play a part in the world'; that which 'is' is uncreated, only that which 'is not' comes into being; God is incomprehensible, without beginning and end. All creation will fade away: 'One alone will remain amid passing things'; 'only the invisible, the incomprehensible, will endure'. The whole creation will pass away; the Indestructible alone will abide. Only he abides, the Imperishable who called into being earth and sky, air and water, moon and sun, night and day, the ten thousand hills and mountain peaks, sea and dry land, the river channels, the saints, apostles, teachers, Shiva, Indra and all the gods. 'He alone knows his own secret: no other knows it'. Immune from birth and death, the unconditioned is the changeless beholder; the uncreated Brahma is eternally changeless.41

Dadu sets out to see the unseen, to describe the indescribable, to fathom the unfathomable, to speak about the unspeakable, to know the unknowable, to approach the unapproachable, to ford the unfordable, and 'to die' for the deathless. The attributeless

and stainless God is the creator of everything. He fashions and destroys the fourteen worlds in a moment; he makes and unmakes them; He called into being earth and sky, the waters and the boundless air; He fashioned sun and moon as lamps; he spread out night and day; He created Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; he created gods, men and saints. All greatness, glory and splendour belong to him. The power of the Almighty passes comprehension. Dadu is overwhelmed by his power; it is revealed in his creation; he planted the soul within the body; he united the five elements to form one dwelling; the one has appeared as manifold, and all is resolved again into one; the Merciful one upholds the universe. God created the heavens, and adorned them with constellations; this vast expanse he created out of the five elements and looked upon his handiwork. In a moment the doer transforms an insect into an elephant, and from the elephant he forms an insect; none can undo his work; he makes the mountain a mustard seed, and he makes the mustard seed a mountain; he forms dry land in the midst of waters, and covers the dry land with water; he fills the empty store house in a moment, and he makes full treasury empty; he changes earth into sky and sky into earth; he changes the dark night into day, and day into night; he can bring forth the dead from the burning-ground and cause him to walk; in a moment He fashions and destroys; his ways are beyond comprehension.42

The creator is the only doer. There is no one to control him. Deeds control the soul; the doer controls the deeds. What he has done is, and what He will do shall be; doer and cause alike are he; there is no other. We are not the doers, the doer is another. The doer will accomplish all: 'take not upon thyself the part of the doer'. 'What the lord has done has come to pass: what He will do shall be; whatsoever the doer brings to pass comes to pass', he is the controller of men's destinies. Says Dadu:

That which we devise does not come to pass. He is the real doer, and he does something else. He calls for one, and sends another; His wondrous mastery cannot be comprehended.

As he keeps so shall we remain: we have no power in ourselves. All is in your hand. Where can anyone flee? The cord is in Hari's hand, and fastened about my neck. The performer turns the monkey at his will.

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The right attitude towards the all-powerful master is that of a slave or a servant. 'You the mighty lord, are my master: Dadu is your lowly slave'. 'You are my master. Your servant Dadu is before you'. Acceptance of God's will is the means of pleasing him. What is pleasing to God only he knows but the true worshipper does not speak ill of what he ordains. Rest in God's pleasure and accept what is ordained by him. 'I surrender my life', says Dadu, 'I no longer fear to die'. Liberation can come only through him and never by one's own effort alone. God's grace is an expression of his omnipotence, linked to the divine attribute of mercy. Men may break loose from Ram but Ram never breaks loose from men. The raw thread on the spinning wheel is mended as soon as it is broken. When God beholds the humble in affliction, He is deeply moved. The lord of the humble is merciful: 'when the saint is afflicted, then is Hari afflicted. Such is the creator'.44

The omnipotent and transcendent God is also omnipresent and immanent. He is all-pervading: 'Without, within, near and far, the master is everywhere. Wheresoever I look, there is no other'. He is present everywhere, in the mountains and in the trees. 'Wherever I turn I see him alone'. His light fills all creation. Like the sun in the heavens, God fill all. He dwells freely within the heart. 'The souls of men and the beloved are not separate: all dwell together'. The indwelling Ram is present to all like the face in a mirror or the reflection in the water; the Lord dwells in the spirits of men like oil in the oilseed, the fragrance in the flower, butter in the milk, warmth in the sun, and coolness in the moon. 'He that made the temple of the heart, the same is he that dwells in the temple of the heart; within the heart is the beloved companion: there is no other'. The image of the master is in all his servants. Since God is in birds, beasts, the trees of the forest and the three worlds formed of the five elements, Dadu has made them all his $gur\bar{u}$. 'When with its eyes the spirit beholds itself, there is the Supreme Spirit. He it is whom it beholds'.⁴⁵

Man's relationship with God is not only that of the bondage of slavery or service but also of love. Dadu talks of the lover and the beloved as frequently as the talks of the servant and the master. 'I have found the unchanging lover, in that place where is perennial joy; the supreme soul sports with the human soul: the servant is with his lord. In an ecstasy of delight I sport with the lover'. God is the beloved as well as the lover. 'The beloved is the deliverer'. Dadu seeks neither joy nor sorrow, but 'the face of the beloved'. Dadu is athirst for love and implores Ram to give him the drink: 'Fill the cup before mine eyes, and give life to the dead'. He cannot find love through learning. Only when talking and listening are past, and 'self' and 'other' are destroyed, and when 'I' and 'thou' are no more, is Brahma fully revealed. 'Gods nature is love, God's form is love, God's substance is love, God's colour is love'. 'Without love all is false'. Dadu would be fully content only when he meets the lord 'face to face'. Dadu says: '0 lord, let me see Thy face, even for a moment, and be blessed'. To behold God's face and his lotus feet is to live in fellowship with him, in all happiness.46

The pangs of separation are welcome as the sign of yearning for meeting. 'In my yearning desire for the beloved I break into song day and night: I pour out my woes like the singing-bird'. Dadu would abandon 'knowledge' and 'contemplation', self-torture and the practise of yoga, and choose 'to know the pangs of separation'. Attachment to God does not spring without the pain of separation that results from loving devotion. Without a torturing thirst, one cannot taste the joy of communion. 'O God, give me an aching desire to behold the vision of the absent one'. Attachment to God and pain of separation are born of love, not of words. Dadu weeps floods of tears in his longing to meet the beloved; there is no peace without him; how can he continue to live? He who has wounded him, he alone can heal. Enduring the pangs of separation, Dadu awaits the coming of Hari. He who ardently

yearns for the meeting, like a fish taken out of the water, he beholds the vision. 'The spirit is united to him'.47

Deep reflection is needed to know what separates man from God. First reflect, and then go forward. Behold the nature of the beginning and the end before embarking on any enterprise'. There is no comparison between 'one who reflects and ten million who follow outward rules'. Love and devotion result from 'reflecting on the mystery of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ and Brahma' - the creation and the creator. To know the distinction between $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ and Brahma is to realize the truth.

Truth abides for ever from age to age: but only a few find it; Falsehood abounds in the world, in all the things that are born and die.

Falsehood suffers change, but truth does not.

Commit yourself to the True One: this is the instruction of the $s\bar{a}dh$.⁴⁸

The Truth, Ram, is in all and in every thing, but nothing is real by itself. Not the universe but Ram 'alone abides'. 'Thou alone art, and death cannot kill thee; but I and mine will presently die'. Dadu has found 'this truth by meditation'. The world is false in contrast with the truth of God. But 'the lure of the world enslaves body, mind and soul'. The creation becomes a veil between man and God.

Māyā figures largely in Dadu's Bānī. Beholding the power of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, the heart grows very proud; beholding $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, the mind is elated and the heart swells with pleasure. Drinking the delights of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, the heart of butter becomes stone; it is destroyed by $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, as milk is destroyed by vinegar. Through contact with the foul, the heart becomes foul. Ravished by $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, the heart is intoxicated with the pleasures of the senses. 'Forsaking the real, it is enamoured of false appearances'. Māyā is a witch: it has devoured many. Even Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh drank the poison of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$. God, the charmer, has charmed the universe, the three realms, Shiva and Vishnu and the sage Narada, the whole company of gods, and the holy sages. All men stand with folded hands

before $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$; they have broken loose from God 'who created them from a drop of water'. Māyā is the enemy of the soul. Maddened with the wine of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, the soul has forgotten the Beloved. God has thrown the curtain of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ across the doorway, so that none may perceive him. His $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ has deceived all.⁴⁹

Man begins to drink the wine of māyā with his birth; his heart goes out in desire towards father and mother; he becomes enamoured of a young woman in youth, and becomes burdened with a heavy load by the time he is middle-aged; and in old age his face is wrinkled but his body is not cleansed. His boat is sinking in the ocean of life and there is no one to comfort him. His whole life is a tale of entanglement in māyā. 'I have done all for the gratification of the senses', says Dadu; 'I have given the mind whatever it craved'. Dadu has done nothing for the purpose with which God created the world. He did not realize the transitoriness of life and remained occupied with things which come and go. 'Gone are home and wealth, gone, in a moment, wife and child; gone father and mother, gone kinsmen and friends; gone self, gone other, gone the world's varied delights'. The senses instigate the body and blind the mind. A pauper without Ram, the mind covets the three worlds. Subject to the senses, it goes forth in desire towards every living thing; it wanders about at the bidding of the senses. The māyā makes it dance. 'The five enemies' give Dadu no rest. Led by the five senses, the mind wanders in all directions and never turns back; quaffing the deadly draught and rejoicing in illusion, it mistakes poison for nectar; enfeebled with worldly pleasures, it feels no pain in indulgence. Added to sensual pleasures are moral foibles like greed, anger, and pride.50

However, the mind, though linked to the senses, is linked to God as well: on the other: 'if the heart is pure, the body will be pure'. 'If the heart is poisoned, the body is the snake: do what it will, the poison remains'. While the heart is defiled, the body remains unclean; nothing can cure its sickness. 'When the heart is pure, the body too is pure. 'Says Dadu: Let a man meditate on this truth'. The mind moves about like a mad elephant; its impulses

are as many as the waves of the sea. It can be brought into subjection little by little. From the mind defilement arises: it is cleansed away with the mind; within the mind illusion arises: it departs within the mind. 'By the mind the mind is made steadfast, by the mind the mind is directed towards God; by the mind the mind is united to him, and wanders not elsewhere'. The mind is made pure in fellowship with the Lord. 'He whose mirror is bright beholds the reflection in it; he whose glass is soiled cannot see his face'. 51

Dadu appears to have interalized the Sūfī idea of tauhīd and the Vedantic idea of non-duality. He makes frequent references to the false opposition between 'I' and 'He', or 'I' and 'Thou':

Where Ram is, there I am not; where I am, there Ram is not.

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The place is too narrow to have two.

The second is there so long as the self remains.

When the self is blotted out, there is no second.

When I am not, there is but one; when I obtrude, then two.

The veil of 'l' and 'Thou' is gone when He is seen as He is.⁵²

Dadu was fascinated with the idea of dying to self, to become dead in life. 'My enemy "I" is dead', he says; 'now none can slay me'. Dadu is willing to strike off his head and dedicate it to Ram. Having slain himself he has died in order to live. When 'I and mine' are wholly lost, only then we find the beloved, and there is pure vision. 'When the selfhood passes away, the beloved is revealed'. Dadu's Bānī contains a number of verses on 'the living dead'. The path he advocates becomes sharp like the sword's edge. 53

Dadu refers to karma as frequently as he refers to māyā. The power of deeds (karma) is recognized:

If the soul is the Doer, why is it chained?

Why is it in the power of deeds (karma)? Why is it entangled?⁵⁴ As in the past so in the present, actions have their own peculiar importance:

The mind delights in talking and listening, but doing is quite different.

Darkness is not dispelled by words, but by a lamp with oil and a wick.

Doers we are not, but brave talkers we are.

Talk is very close to us but the deed is far away.55

Dadu counsels everyone: 'As thou doest, so shalt thou receive; there is no sharing with any: the lord sees what is in every heart'. The master calls every one to account: 'Fear him, fear him; O fear the lord. When he takes account, thou must pay to the full'. Not the unwrought deed but the deed done does cling: 'At the portal of the Lord is justice, according to Rama's good pleasure'. No one can escape punishment if judged strictly on the basis of actions. 'Says Dadu: If the lord should call me to account, then would he behead and impale me. If, of His goodness and compassion, he forgives, then do I live indeed'. Dadu advises men to cultivate moral qualities: to have done with pride and arrogance, conceit, envy, and self-assertion, and to practise humility and obedience. 'When a man has abandoned false pride, arrogance, and vainglory, when he has become humble and meek, then does he find true bliss'. On the whole, thus, deeds have their effects and, therefore, good deeds and moral qualities are all the more important. However, karma, as the law of deeds is mentioned more or less contextually; it does not operate independently of God's will or his grace.56

Dadu talks of release from 'the chain of re-births'. 'One returns to earth in various re-births: another is united to the one'. 'Many there are who return to this world of illusion'. 'They return time and again, and resume their former state'. Dadu is clearly talking of transmigration in these verses. Elsewhere, as we noticed earlier, he talks of one life. 'Now the elephant, now the creeping insect. The man is changed into a beast. The pig, the dog, the jackal, the lion, the snake, all dwell within the heart; the elephant, the grub, yea all living things. But the pandits know it not'. Dadu appears almost to tell the *pandit* that death-and-rebirth takes place every day in this very life and he does not have to invoke the doctrine of transmigration. In any case, liberation is an urgent

matter. 'While the patient is alive they say: After death he will be freed from sickness. Nay, rather use such remedies now as will alay the burning pain of this present life'. In another verse, Dadu comes close to saying that this life is the only opportunity for liberation. 'O take not away my life till I have beheld thee. If I be separated from thee now, how shall I meet thee again? Not thus can one know thee a second time'. You will not have this body again and again to squander idly: 'such a life will not come again'. 'When the opportunity is past thou shalt gain nothing. Where shalt thou find it again'? Despite references to the chain of re-births, Dadu does not appear to attach much importance to the idea of transmigration. What is more important for him is to hammer the point that the human life provides the opportunity for liberation and it should not be lost.⁵⁷

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Like the old ideas of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, karma, and transmigration, Dadu uses the relatively new concepts of the Divine Preceptor $(gur\bar{u})$, the Name $(n\bar{a}m)$, and the Word (shabda) at many places in his $B\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$. The Guru is bounteous and compassionate; he shows the way to the merciful one; he gives to the soul head and hands, eyes and ears; the true $gur\bar{u}$ $(satgur\bar{u})$ bestows hearing and sight, taste and speech.

Teaching the Name of Ram, he has ended coming and going; The Satguru has given all by uniting the soul with Himself.⁵⁸

The Satguru makes of the beast a man; the man becomes a saint, the saint a god, and the god very Niranjan. Dadu has found the Guru 'who restores the dead to life', 'who can transform the soul into Brahma'. The Guru is the boatman who takes men aboard and sets them there where is the throne of the deathless, the ineffable. The disciple is purified by the Guru as gold is purified by the goldsmith, in the fire of his smithy. 'He frees it from all blemishes, that it may be worn about the neck'. It is clear that Dadu is not talking of any human gurū here. His 'Guru' is God:

My Guru, by Himself alone, enjoys His play. Himself He gives and Himself takes away. He Himself originates duality, and Himself He unites.⁵⁹

Dadu uses the term nām frequently in his Bānī. As God is, so is his name; only he knows Himself: 'to that knowledge I have no access'. God's name is known to God alone: no epithet used by human beings can describe him. 'All Your names are excellent, but they are not what You are'. The creator has many and diverse names. The devotee may remember him by any of these names. 'Worship him by that name which best befits the occasion'. The name holds the truth of the three worlds; it makes known the self; and one day Hari comes to meet you. 'Apart from the name of Niranjan, there is no light'. The name of Ram is 'the quintessence of truth'; the world is an ocean and the name of Ram is 'the true boat'. If men do not take Ram's name, and his alone, while there is yet opportunity, they would speak it when at last they face their enemy, the lord of death. There is no magical power in the mechanical repetition of 'Ram': 'Everyone takes the name of Rama, but there is great difference in the use of it; one returns to earth in various rebirths: another is united to the one'. Take the name of Ram in your speaking and hearing, in your giving and taking, and in your eating and drinking.60 The name has the power to destroy the effect of ill deeds.

If in an auspicious moment the heart dwells in the Name, Niranjan,

All the karma is destroyed in a trice.

The power of material things and of the senses, is destroyed with ease.

Cherish the name of Ram so that the bondage of karma is broken.⁶¹

The word (shabda) is used by Dadu with reference to creation. 'By a single word He created all things, so great is his power'. The Guru speaks the word 'in my ears'. Uttering the word, the True Guru awakens the soul at will; he speaks within; he smites with his words, carefully directing his aim. 'The Satguru has spoken the word with his mouth, be the mark near or far; the disciple has heard with his ears, and is stirred to remembrance of

God'. Through the word all is accomplished; through the word the saint is united to God. Without the word the saint cannot live. 62

The sadhu quietly meditates on the word to be united to him in unbroken communion.

The coward flees for his life, but the brave warrior stands firm. He who reflects on the word, fulfils his duties, and cherishes the Name of Ram in his very soul,

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Who seeks the truth in life - he, says Dadu, attains liberation. 63
The word (shabda) in Dadu's Bāṇī is the instrument of God's self-communication, the voice of the eternal speaking in the heart of his devotee. 64

Like Kabir, Dadu identifies himself with the sants. They are rare. The sandal tree is not found in every forest. The diamond is brought from distant parts, while the common stones are available everywhere. The wise man who has been set free through the instruction of the Guru may be found here and there, but not everywhere. The saints are compared to the swans, feeding on pearls. The saint in the world is like the fragrance of the cool sandal tree, a boat on the sea of life, a priceless diamond, the stone that transforms all into gold; many have found salvation by travelling in his company, by seeking his presence, by joining his fellowship, and through his touch. Through the fellowship of the saint one can become pure and one's defilement passes away. Without the saint, the Satguru can never be found. If you truly yearn to meet Ram, seek the company of the saints; with them is Ram. Through fellowship with Hari one meets the saints; through fellowship with the saints one meets Hari.65 There is a whole hymn on the saint in the Bani of Dadu:

The foremost saint is he who sings the praises of Govind, Who meditates on Ram, discards the poison of pleasures, and does not think of self,

Who does not indulge in idle talk and slanders no one, Who discards vice and appropriates virtue, and who concentrates on Hari's feet,

Who bears enmity to none, and regards others as his own,

Who ignores self, and seeks equally the good of all,

Who makes no distinction between himself and others, seeing the divine presence in all,

Who sincerely remembers the True One and devoutly meditates on Him,

Who worships the One devoid of fear, and is himself attached to nothing else.

Rare is such a person in the world, says Dadu.66

The sādh of Dadu acquires traits of the object of his worship. Dadu's ideal is reflected in his prayer to God. 'Lord, give me true contentment, love, devotion, faith; give me uprightness, patience, truth'. There are two hymns of Dadu which came to be used by his followers in their daily āratī. These hymns underscore the traits of a true devotee of God: inner spirit, inward voice, sincerity, wisdom, continual devotion, dedication, meditation, service, love and trust.⁶⁷

The fatherhood of God becomes the basis of humanism for Dadu. 'There is but one Spirit, and He has no enmity'. When you are in doubt, there appear to be two; when error is dispelled and doubt resolved, there is no other. 'To whom then wilt thou bear enmity, when there is no other? He from whose being all sprang, the same dwells in all'. 'In every man is the one Spirit: hold him therefore in respect. Recognize that spirit in thyself and others: it is the manifestation of the Lord'. Why give pain to any when the indwelling Ram is in everyone? 'Seek rather the good of all: this is the duty of the religious man'. 'All spirits are brother-spirits, the offspring of one womb'. Bear hatred toward none. 'I behold all the world as one, and all spirits as friends'. All human beings are equal in Dadu's eyes, as they are for God. 68

V

Dadu is prepared to make a distinction between men and men only on the basis of piety or devotion to God. There are many great scholars and brave imparters of wisdom; there are endless religious garbs, but rarely is one found wholly devoted to God's service. Useless is a vessel of gold filled with poison.

Far better is a flask of leather filled with the nectar of Ram. ⁶⁹ The 'vessel of gold' and the 'flask of leather' could possibly refer to socially high and low. Dadu's comment on caste is relevant in this connection. The pride of birth is an obstacle to spiritual pursuits. When one abandons the pride of birth, and when vainglory drops away, then may one be 'face to face with the creator'. ⁷⁰ Since occupations were intimately linked with hereditary jātīs, Dadu's comment on occupations is of great relevance:

There is no reproach in following an occupation, if one knows the craft.

There is joy indeed in work if it is done for the sake of the Lord.⁷¹

There are two aspects of this comment: one, that renunciation is not necessary; two, that any honest occupation is commendable. In other words, spiritual life can be combined with temporal work, and there is no bar on change in one's occupation.

Dadu comments directly on caste. 'Each consorts with the members of his own caste; the servant of Rama observes no such distinctions'. As we noticed earlier, Dadu does not favour distinctions between Hindu and Muslim. Thus, in theory, he is equidistant from all castes and religious communities. There is the same Brahma in all Brahmans and Shudras as in all Hindus and Muslims. There are many and diverse castes only when we look at external attributes. Man is bound up with body and mind, with the senses and the objects of sense. 'If Brahma lives in the house of a shudra, what is left of the caste-law?' Dadu appears to allude to the religious sanction sought for the varna order through a hymn of the Rigveda:

Dividing Brahma into parts they have made up factions;

Forsaking the whole they are bound by the knot of delusion.⁷³ These comments indicate that the path of Dadu was open to individuals from all castes, or even to the outcastes, as it was open to members of all religious communities. This is one important interpretation of the idea of equality.

Occasionally, Dadu speaks in the female voice, especially in verses which relate to separation. 'Beloved One, my couch is solitary. How is it that I do not find Thee there? This is the fruit of my past deeds: now have they all come in view'. 'Thou, O Rama, art my Lord: I am wedded to Thee. Without Thee have I wandered far: I have received my deserts'. 'The bereft one takes no pleasure in her ornaments. Is there any who can cause her to meet with Rama?' She has forgotten her unguents and adornments; she knows only the bitter pain of separation. The newly bereft is weary of all her trappings; night and day she sighs as the chātrik for the dew. 'She delights in no other: without Rama she has become as one dead'. Elsewhere Dadu talks of 'a woman bereft of her lord'.74 These verses carry the implication that the path of liberation is open to women. However, the context of conjugality, which Dadu takes for granted, places women socially and economically in a subordinate position. As we noticed earlier in the Dādū Janmalīlā, Dadu advocates celibacy even for women as an option. The female devotees could pursue spiritual life without being subordinate to men. Dedication to God freed them from subjection to patriarchy, at least in theory.

Harbans Mukhia has examined Dadu's attitude towards the state and the social classes on the assumption that Dadu's views were not only a reflection but also a determinant of popular consciousness regarding the state and society. He rightly points out that Guru and God were important in Dadu's thought. The Guru is indispensable 'Without the Guru even a hundred thousand moons and millions of suns cannot enlighten man's dark corners'. 'With all the pools of water, the bird would remain thirsty if the Guru's grace is not available'. The Guru's power over men is absolute. Their loyalty to him is personal and total. The Guru provides guidance as an act of grace. This conception of the Guru, with its two poles of power and benevolence, corresponds closely to Abul Fazl's conception of the sovereign. Mukhia appears to assume that Dadu is talking of the human gurū. We know, however,

that the gurū for Dadu is God as the Preceptor. But this does not affect Mukhia's argument.

In Dadu's metaphors God is depicted in terms of a great king. The epithets used for him are Sultan, Mahārāj, the Rāo of Rāos. He has a Dīwān, a treasury, courtiers, soldiers, news-writers, messengers, trumpeters, poets, dancers and slave girls. Millions of gods stand in his court with folded hands. On entering his court one has to perform prostration (sijdah). The relationship between God and man is that of the master and the slave. A truly loyal devotee willingly dies for him. Even the titled khāns are accountable to God as the king. His orders have to be obeyed. At the same time, his generosity towards his servants is unbounded; he protects them, and he forgives their shortcomings. Dadu's conception of a majestic and absolute but benevolent God-Guru at the religious level corresponds closely to Abul Fazl's conception of the king at the political level. Significantly, Dadu appreciates a single political authority in the realm. 'There would be peace only if there is unity of political authority; if there is duality, no one can remain happy due to the ensuing conflicts. With one political authority there is tranquility in the city; the king and the subjects are happy and there is light everywhere'. Dadu upholds the monarchical system. Even though he refers to the king rather contextually, he reinforces the status quo. The evidence of $D\bar{a}d\bar{u}$ Janmalīlā suggests, nevertheless, that Dadu was not keen to associate himself with any ruler. He did not seek state patronage. The ruler too was subject to God's power and justice.

Mukhia observes that Dadu does not complain about the functioning of the social classes. If any protest is implied, it is brief and very general. The $r\bar{a}n\bar{a}s$, $r\bar{a}os$ and $kh\bar{a}ns$ should not allow their ambition to grow so as to cover 'the whole earth and the sky'. Dadu, as Rāwat of Raja Ram, advises himself never to forsake his name. In other words, loyalty and restraint on ambition are inculcated. To control 'the village' (his body), the $r\bar{a}wat$ should take care of his soul. The metaphor does imply that the $r\bar{a}wat$ should not be arbitrary or oppressive.

The Sāhu is mentioned by Dadu as a person of great consequence. In fact, God is likened to the Sāhu. His business in not only legitimate but also important. From the trader, nonetheless, honestry is demanded. The metaphor used is not easy to interpret. 'One who has devoted oneself to God alone is in reality the wise one; engage in satta (speculation) with the Creator if you want to sell at high price'. Readiness to die in the way of God is likened to speculation, and high price is likened to liberation. The practice is lauded and denigrated at the same time. In honesty lies wisdom; in faithfulness to the master lies protection. Not trade but sharp practices in trade stand denounced.

Dadu's references to some other classes of people too are of some significance. The cultivators are noticed for their need of seeds and water for irrigation to have good harvest. This emphasizes the need of effort. The metaphor of God and the True Guru is used in this context too. Like a good cultivator who gives personal attention to his fields, God never forgets his devotees. There are references to the banjārā and the weaver, carrying a similar kind of moral import.

On the whole, in Mukhia's analysis, Dadu appears to attack the conservative orthodoxy of both Hindus and Muslims at the social level, carrying the implication of denunciation of their mutual animosity; at the political level he conceives of God in the image of the absolute monarch. He appears to accept the ideals and institutions of the ruling class. He accepts also the class structure of the society. But he demands of each class that it should function 'more honestly'. His attitude is not of protest so much as of resignation. The point gets hammered that in the case of Dadu radical ideas in the realm of religion do not carry radical implications for the social realm, and much less for politics.

According to Savitri Chandra Shobha, Dadu emphasizes the equality of men and women. 76 She notes, however, that Dadu shares with Kabir many prejudices against women. He upholds and re-affirms the essentially dependent role of women in society. Service to the husband is regarded as an essential part of her

duty. The devoted wife is presented as the ideal woman. At one level Dadu regards woman as the symbol of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ and $k\bar{a}ma$. She presents a grave danger to the devotee of God, standing in the way of his salvation. The sant is advised to shun women. Woman is seen as the natural enemy of man. This does not apply, however, to all women. In the home, the devoted wife is admired. Dadu did not insist on celibacy. Salvation could be pursued by a householder as well as a renunciant. To be a householder or a recluse was not relevant: a lamp remains a lamp whether it is lighted in the house or in the wilderness.

Dadu's metaphor of satī is of great interest in this context. The widow who becomes a satī might not have been a devoted wife. She might even have been a woman of loose morals. In order to ensure respect for her family she may become satī against her own inclination. Such statements carry the implication that the resolve to become a satī did not arise from a spirit of devotion to the husband. Even on the part of a devoted wife to become a satī was not necessarily praiseworthy. For Dadu, it was far better for a woman to sacrifice herself for God than for her deceased husband. Since her sacrifice for Ram is metaphorical, she actually lives in total dedication to him. Dadu's comment on satī establishes more emphatically than anything else in his compositions that the path of liberation was open to women. The evidence of Dādū Janmalīlā shows that he was opposed to child marriage and he was sympathetic towards the widow.

VI

The disciples and lay followers of Dadu constituted in a sense a socio-religious group in his lifetime. He did not pay much attention, however, to its organization. A number of loosely linked centres came into existence. An important centre was founded at Sanganer by Rajab, known as Rajab Das in the later Dadu-Panthi tradition but born as a Muslim (Rajab Ali Khan). He remained celibate. He composed verses and admitted disciples. Through them, his memory is preserved in many villages of Rajasthan. In fact, his

followers have the distinction of being called Rajab-Panthis, constituting a panth within the Panth.

The youngest disciple of Dadu was Sundar Das the Younger who was only eight years old at the time of Dadu's death. He led a wandering life, visiting places associated with Dadu and going into the Punjab, Gujarat and the Deccan. He composed several works and collected his poems in his lifetime. He was a friend of Rajab and, in fact, died at Sanganer in the 1680s. His own youngest disciple succeeded him to 'the thambha of Sundar Das' at Fatehpur.

Sundar Das the Elder is a legendary figure, appearing for the first time in the *Bhaktamāla* of Ragho Das, written around 1800. Nevertheless, he came to be associated with the *thambha* at Ghatra in the Alwar state, and the Dadu-Panthi *Nāgās* began to trace their origin to him.

Another disciple of Dadu, called Banwari or Bihari Das, founded a centre at Ratiya in the present state of Haryana. His disciples and followers were initially known as 'northerners' (uttarādhā), and even when his disciples spread later into Sindh, Gujarat and Central India, the name stuck. The uttarādhās were mostly in business, medicine, and agriculture.

The first successor of Dadu at Naraina was his eldest son Garib Das. He continued with Dadu's work, perhaps preserving and strengthening his legacy. But when he nominated one of his disciples, Kewal Ram, as his successor, Garib Das's brother Maskin occupied the Dwara. Significantly, Kewal Ram set up a 'seat' of his own in the name of Garib Das, and his followers came to be known as Garibdasis. Maskin remained the head of the Dadu-Dwara at Naraina from the death of Garib Das in 1636 to his own death in 1648. He was succeeded by his son Faqir Das who headed the Dwara till his death in 1693. After this, there was an election and Jait Ram, known as Jait Sahib, was chosen as the head. He did not belong to the family of Dadu. He remained unmarried, and was succeeded by celibate heads like himself. For about forty years from 1693 to 1732, Jait Sahib provided guidance

to Dadu-Panthis and tried to evolve a kind of central organization. This was an important development because the followers of Dadu were very loosely linked earlier. Jait Sahib's successor, Kishan Das (1732-53), sought refuge in Marwar when Sawai Jai Singh of Amber passed orders that the heads of certain religious establishments should be married men. Keen to preserve his celibacy, Kishan Das founded a centre near Merta and died there. After the death of Sawai Madhu Singh in 1767, Chain Sahib, a grand-disciple of Kishan Das, returned to Naraina, and died there in 1780. He was succeeded by Nirbhai Ram who died in 1814. Under his successors the Dadu-Dwara at Naraina has survived into the present century as the central shrine of the Dadu-Panthis.

In the worship of the Dadu-Panthis, the āratī hymns of Dadu were frequently recited. In these hymns, the symbolism of the temple ritual is used to emphasize the inward and spiritual character of true worship. The Bānī of Dadu was recited as the authentic voice of the Guru. In due course, the Book acquired a central importance. The symbolism of the āratī hymns was gradually replaced by the actual introduction of visible and trangible objects. The accession of Jait Ram had marked the final triumph of the ascetical ideal. An attempt was made to approximate the Dadu-Panth to the four great schools (sampradayas) of Vaishnavism. Like the Kabir Panth, the Panth of Dadu became increasingly Vaishnavized (and, therefore, 'Hinduized') with the passage of time. This was observed by Traill though even he was not fully aware of the degree of transformation.

An important development among the Dadu-Panthis was the rise of a new segment known as Nāgās who adopted the profession of arms. Militancy among the Bairāgīs was not uncommon in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In fact, Jait Sahib, who tried to impose a certain degree of discipline among Dadu-Panthis, accommodated its militant members. A fighting branch of the order was recognized. After Jait Sahib's death, the military leaders became even more important. Notable among them were Kewal Das Udehi and Hirdai Ram. They are said to have been connected

with the thambha of Sundar Das the Elder. The Nāgās finally emerged as a distinguished category of Dadu-Panthis under Santokh Das (1779-1825). He remained supreme as the Mahant of all the Nāgās from about 1780 to 1818 when the Rajput states became subject to British paramountcy. The services of the Nāgās were not needed by the state thereafter. In the eighteenth century the Nāgās had become a kind of auxiliary force which could be called to the help of the state. In 1797, they actually entered the service of the Jaipur state to which they always cherished a strong sentiment of loyalty. After 1818, they reverted to their traditional occupation of collectors of revenue. Santokh Das died in 1825. The Nāgās were first divided into four units (jama 'ats), and then into seven, with eleven akhārās, each headed by its own mahant.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Dadu-Panthis stood clearly differentiated into several categories. Perhaps the most important difference was between the pacific khālsā and the militant nāgās. No less important was the difference between the renunciates and the householders. The presence of the monastic wing implied the presence also of lay-followers. Begging was allowed to the Dadu-Panthi ascetics. They differed little in appearance from the ordinary Hindu ascetics. They did not wear any sectarian mark on their forehead but they were clad in yellow robes. The uttarādhās were distinguished by their milder discipline and their readiness to engage in secular pursuits. They represented the wealthy and enterprising component of the Panth. It is difficult to estimate the total number of Dadu-Panthis at the end of the eighteenth century, but it could not be very large. The later census figures suggest that around 1800 the Dadu-Panthis could be counted only in thousands, and not in tens of thousands. Left by Dadu to develop largely on its own, his Panth remained highly decentralized and became increasingly diversified and Vaishnavized during the seventeenth and eighteen centuries. Its militant segment became subserviant to the state.

NOTES

- 1. John Traill, 'Dadu, Dadu Panthis', Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed., James Hastings. Edinburgh, 1967 (sixth impression). Traill translated the Dādū Janmalīlā and the Bānī of Dadu into English, but the translation could not be published. Winand M. Callewaert, The Hindi Biography of Dadu Dayal, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1988, pp. 11, 12.
- 2. W.G. Orr, A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic: Dadu and His Followers, London, 1947, pp. 26-44, 45-7.
- 3. Ibid., p. 47.
- 4. Ibid., pp. 46-8.
- 5. Ibid., pp. 48-58.
- Winand M. Callewaret, The Hindi Biography of Dadu Dayal, pp. 17-31; 'Dadu and the Dadu-Panth: The Sources'. The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India, ed., Karine Schomer and W.H. McLeod, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1987, pp. 181-9.
- 7. Winand M. Callewaert, The Hindi Biography of Dadu Dayal, pp. 87-8. It may be pointed out that Callewaert's translation is not always accurate. Therefore, we have followed the text wherever necessary.
- 8. Ibid., pp. 33-6.
- 9. Ibid., pp. 36-41, 59-60.
- 10. Ibid., pp. 41-6.
- 11. Ibid., pp. 46-8.
- 12. Ibid., pp. 48-50.
- 13. Ibid., pp. 50-1.
- 14. Ibid., pp. 51-7.
- 15. Ibid., pp. 57-9, 60-3.
- 16. Ibid., pp. 63-4.
- 17. Ibid., pp. 64-6.
- 18. lbid., pp. 66-7.
- 19. Ibid., pp. 67-8.
- 20. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
- 21. Ibid., pp. 70-2.
- 22. Ibid., pp. 72-4.

- 23. Ibid., pp. 74-6.
- 24. Ibid., pp. 76-9.
- 25. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
- 26. Ibid., pp. 80-5.
- 27. Ibid., pp. 85-7.
- Orr, A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic, pp. 79-82. Pandit Chandrika Prasad Tripathi (ed.), Srī Svāmī Dadu Dayāl kī Bānī, Vaidic Yantralaya, Ajmer, 1907.
- 29. Winand M. Callewaert, 'The Sarvangi of the Dadupanthi Gopaldas', Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature, ed., Alan W. Entwistle and Françoise Mallison, New Delhi: Manohar, 1994, p. 454.
- 30. For example, John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, Songs of the Saints of India, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1988 (paperback). Peter G. Friedlander, 'The Core of the Vani of Raidas', Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature, pp. 455-79. John Stratton Hawley, 'The Nirgun/Sugun Distinction in Early Manuscript Anthologies of Hindi Devotion', Bhakti Religion in North India, ed., David N. Lorenzen. New Delhi: Manohar, 1996, pp. 160-80. Charlotte Vaudeville, A Weaver Named Kabir, Oxford India Paperbacks, 1997.
- 31. Winand M. Callewaret, 'The Sarvangi of Dadupanthi Gopaldas', p. 453.
- 32. Orr refers to the original padas and sākhīs in the Ajmer text, which makes it easy to compare his translation with the text of Dadu. We have used Orr's translation as well as the Ajmer text. Orr's translation appears on the whole to depict the sense of the original rather accurately. We have compared the Ajmer text, wherever possible, with the text in the Sarvangī of Gopal Das. A copy of the rare Ajmer text was kindly sent to us by Professor V.K. Vashishtha and Mahant Sri Bajrang Das Swami, Principal, Sri Dadu Acharya Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, Jaipur.
- Winand M. Callewaert, The Sarvang of Gopaldas, Manohar, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 7-17. Karine Schomer, 'The Doha as a Vehicle of Sant Teachings', The Sants, p. 76.

- 34. Karine Schomer, ibid., pp. 76-82.
- 35. Orr, A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic, pp. 61, 63, 102, 105, 120, 148.
- 36. Ibid., pp. 99, 154-5, 160, 166, 174.
- 37. Ibid., pp. 61, 62, 63, 72, 73, 74, 93, 114, 122, 127, 134, 152, 181.
- 38. Ibid., pp. 62, 92, 101, 102, 120, 163, 180, 183.
- 39. Ibid., pp. 100, 101, 103, 120, 131, 166.
- 40. Ibid., pp. 85, 104, 120-1, 131, 133, 134, 135.
- 41. Ibid., pp. 113-14, 116-17, 132, 135, 136, 145.
- 42. Ibid., p. 137; Pandit Chandrika Prasad Tripathi, Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī, pp. 270-71, sākhīs 14, 15, 16. Dadu uses the concept of hukm in sākhīs 18, 19. For the rest of the para, Orr, ibid., pp. 77, 106, 136, 137.
- 43. Orr, A Sixteenth Century Indian Mystic, pp. 89, 90, 106-7, 109, 112, 113, 116, 117-18, 121, 135, 136, 142-3, 144, 145, 164, 165, 177, 178.
- 44. Ibid., pp. 88, 98, 122, 125, 136, 139, 176, 183.
- 45. Ibid., pp. 60, 64, 88, 89, 90, 100, 104, 108, 146, 168.
- 46. Ibid., pp. 66, 167, 168, 175.
- 47. Ibid., p. 93. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī, p. 206, sākhīs 162, 163. For the rest of the para, Orr, ibid., pp. 127, 151, 173.
- 48. Orr, A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic, pp. 152-4.
- 49. Ibid., pp. 76, 95, 108-9, 110, 114-15, 169, 170.
- 50. Ibid., pp. 94, 95, 97, 123, 171.
- 51. Ibid., p. 66. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bāṇī, p. 69, sākhīs 44, 47, 48.
- 52. Orr, A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic, pp. 112, 162.
- 53. Ibid., pp. 104-5. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bāṇī, p. 267, sakhi 21.
- 54. Orr, A Sixteenth -Century Indian Mystic, p. 92. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bāṇī, p. 195, sākhīs 69, 70.
- 55. Orr, A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic, pp. 91, 93, 94, 104, 139, 158.
- 56. Ibid., pp. 97, 112, 118, 122, 141, 160, 165, 166.
- 57. Ibid., p. 84. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī, p. 2, sākhī 9.
- 58. Orr, A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic, p. 148. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī, p. 459, pada 243, refrain. For the rest of the para, Orr, ibid, pp. 84, 85, 86, 87.

- 59. Orr, A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic, pp. 96, 110, 131, 140, 141, 148, 164, 173.
- 60. Ibid., p. 167. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī, p. 25, sākhīs 12, 13, 61. Orr, A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic, pp. 77, 84, 85.
- 61. Ibid., p. 147. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī, p. 277, sākhīs 18, 19.
- 62. Orr, Ibid., p. 146.

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- 63. Ibid., p. 73, 102, 169, 175. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bāņī, p. 212, sākhīs 15, 16.
- 64. Ibid., pp. 122-23. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī, p. 507, pada 348.
- 65. Orr, ibid., pp. 108, 125-6, 183.
- 66. Ibid., pp. 101-2, 163.
- 67. Ibid., p. 103. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī, p. 211, sākhī 8.
- 68. Orr, ibid., p. 183.
- 69. Ibid., p. 181. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bāņī, p. 258, sākhī 100.
- Orr, ibid., pp. 61, 92. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī, pp. 202-03, sākhīs 123. 130.
- 71. Orr, ibid., p. 161. Srī Svāmī Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī, p. 192, sākhī 50.
- 72. Orr, ibid., pp. 111, 121.
- 73. Harbans Mukhia, 'The Ideology of the Bhakti Movement: The Case of Dadu Dayal'. Perspectives on Medieval India, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1993.
- 74. Savitri Chandra Shobha, Medieval India and Hindi Bhakti Poetry: A Socio-Cultural Study, Har Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1996.
- 75. This section is based on Jan Gopal's Dādū Janmalīlā, Traill's article on Dadu in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, and Orr's A Sixteenth-Century Indian Mystic.

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Part III GURBANI AND SIKH IDENTITY

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5

THE BĀŅĪ OF GURU AMAR DAS

For a historical analysis of the bani of Guru Amar Das we may turn first of all to the historians of Punjabi literature. K.S. Duggal talks briefly of his life and notes that there are some 901 compositions of Guru Amar Das in the Guru Granth. Duggal states that the style of his hymnology is markedly different from that of Guru Nanak. 'While Guru Nanak was iconoclastic and original in his concepts, Guru Amar Das is more devotional in the way of bhaktī'. Of his longer compositions, that is, Anand, Pattī and four Vars, the Anand occupies a special place of pride in Sikh ritual, being sung or recited at the end of every sacrament. In the tradition of Guru Nanak, Guru Amar Das condemns the Hindu customs like idol worship, fasting and burning of widows. Guru Amar Das preaches the ideas of Guru Nanak with great effect, using mostly the same imagery from the wedded life, agriculture, petty trade, and seasonal changes. He lays great stress on the institution of the Guru whose word or bani has the divine inspiration behind. He stresses the authenticity of the Guru by decrying and condemning the worship of any other deity or preceptor and the denigration of all other beliefs than those preached by Guru Nanak. The worship of the Guru is termed service for which the devotee is promised all worldly and spiritual comforts.1

Sant Singh Sekhon gives a separate chapter to Guru Amar Das. Taking notice of his \bar{A} nand and the four $V\bar{a}$ rs as 'his canon', Sekhon analyses the \bar{A} nand in some detail. In keeping with a major doctrine of Sikhism a worldly bliss is transformed into a spiritual

bliss in this composition. The \bar{A} nand establishes the supremacy of Guru Amar Das's faith by asserting that the Name can be obtained only through the Satguru. Through his grace alone can one have the taste of the Lord. Of the spiritual and metaphysical notions and beliefs in the Anand, only two are not 'traditional': (a) that one would be a sacrifice to him who has bestowed on human beings the sweet infatuation (with this world), and (b) that the world that you see is a form of the Lord, and the Lord is seen through it. Sekhon interprets these statements to mean that 'God has not done any injustice to man by getting him infatuated with this world and, secondly, this world is not to be rejected'. Whereas in the Japu of Guru Nanak are discussed the significant questions of the elements of life, the universe, and the creator. the aim of the \bar{A} nand seems to be the achievement of bliss through the Guru. The dominant mood in the Anand is that of bhaktī. With powerful lyrical effects it describes the main basis of Sikh thought and feeling. Sekhon gives the contents of the composition, with an English translation in an appendix.²

The central theme of the Vars of Guru Amar Das is the same as that of the $V\bar{a}r$ of Guru Nanak in $R\bar{a}g \bar{A}s\bar{a}$: the universe is the handiwork of a creator who is beyond the concepts of beginning. middle and end. This means that man cannot conceive of the time before the beginning of creation or after its end. In Gurbānī, there is no specific reference to a cycle of creation and annihilation as in the Hindu tradition or the Western religions. Sekhon quotes a few lines from the Vars of Guru Amar Das to suggest that they are merely variations on the ideas and expression of Guru Nanak in the Vār Āsā and elsewhere. ³ Guru Amar Das repeats and develops the main philosophical and ethical ideas of Guru Nanak in his own personal idiom and manner. He lays stress on the institution of the Guru and the divine inspiration of his word or bani. To this institution, Guru Amar Das adds the element of the sangat or congregation of the community. The authority of the Guru was stressed by rejecting all other modes of belief and worship. This leads to greater dedication to the community in the devotee's social

life as well. Sekhon suggests that the evolution of the Sikh community as 'a state within the state' may be traced to the time of Guru Amar Das.⁴

As for Duggal so for Sekhon, the worship of the Guru is termed service of the Guru by Guru Amar Das, leading to all temporal and spiritual comforts in reward. Sekhon goes on to compare the conception of service in the compositions of Guru Nanak and Guru Amar Das in Srī Rāg, Rāg Mājh and Rāg Gaurī. However, he does not say anything about the significance of the difference he tries to point out. In the sphere of social life, Guru Amar Das continued the 'revolutionary line' of Guru Nanak. Caste distinctions, untouchability and superstitions of various kinds are condemned. More than two hundred years before Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Lord William Bentinck, Guru Amar Das condemned the institution of satī in the idealistic way characteristic of Guru Nanak.

Both Duggal and Sekhon look at the $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ Guru Amar Das primarily in terms of its continuity and differences with the $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of Guru Nanak. Though their statement is rather comprehensive in its own way, they use the $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of Guru Amar Das selectively. From the perspective of continuity-and-change we propose to look at the entire $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of Guru Amar Das with a slightly different approach for a better appreciation of his position.

H

We may start with Guru Amar Das's conception of the Guru. The terms Guru and Satguru are frequently used in his $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$. The two terms appear to be used interchangeably. One should serve the True Guru with a single minded devotion. The True Guru is the master who is true and pure and he is known through the sabad. The service of the True Guru is hard: one has to give one's head and annihilate the self. By serving the True Guru all attachment is burnt and one becomes a renunciate in the home. They who turn away from the True Guru, their foreheads are blackened. By serving the True Guru we receive eternal peace and the light is mingled

with the Light; they who take refuge with the True Guru deserve all praise. By meeting the Guru one may receive the Name and one's thirst and attachment may end. Without the Guru there can be no peace and the cycle of death and rebirth never ends. The Guru lights the fire of knowledge and the darkness of ignorance goes away. He who walks in accordance with the Guru's will suffers no sorrow; there is nectar in the Guru's will and one attains the state of bliss. Without the Guru the self is never eradicated. The gift is in the hands of the Giver and it is received through the Guru. There can be no bhaktī without the Guru and no gift of bhaktī without the Guru howsoever one may wish for it; on meeting the True Guru we often obtain the wealth by lodging the divine Name in the heart. Without the Guru, we cannot find the proper place and we do not receive the Name; we should look for the True Guru from whom we can receive the truth.' It is easily possible to cite numerous other examples but the point is clearly made. Not only are the two terms interchangeable, the reference more frequently is to the personal Guru, that is, Guru Nanak and his successors. In the bānī of Guru Nanak, primacy is given to the Divine Preceptor; in the bānī of Guru Amar Das, primacy is given to the human Guru who has an aura of divinity.

Similarly, $n\bar{a}m$, sabad and $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ appear to be used interchangeably. We may take the $n\bar{a}m$ first. Human beings are exhorted to meditate on the Name, ask for the Name, and attain the state of bliss through the Name. They who serve the True Guru receive the treasure of the Name. He who has the light of the Name within him, lasts for ever. The divine Name is the ocean of bliss; it is obtained by turning to the Guru. If we meditate on the Name by turning to the Guru, we attain truth. The term sabad appears to be used more frequently than the Name. In any case, the mind is conquered through the sabad of the Guru; the state of liberation is found in the home. One attains God through the sabad, and his service receives the true reward. Their countenances are bright who turn to the Guru and reflect on the Guru's sabad. By lodging the sabad of the Guru within oneself, God is lodged in the

heart. Both the mind and the body become pure when the sabad of the Guru is lodged in the heart; by praising God through the Guru's sabad one is dyed in bliss. The phrases Gur kā sabad and Gursabadī occur frequently in the bāṇī of Guru Amar Das.

Though less frequent, there are a number of references to $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$. True is God and true the $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$; he is attained through the sabad. True is the $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ and true the sabad when one loves the truth. The $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ is revealed for all the four ages; it reveals the truth. Very often, the term $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ is found in association with the Guru. Gurb $\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ is the light of the world; it is appropriated through grace. In pursuit of devotion to God one sings the $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of the Guru day and night. The $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of the Guru is the sweet nectar. One receives the truth, contentment, the bliss of peace, and $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ from the perfect Guru. The term $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ occurs in association with $n\bar{a}m$ as well as sabad and Guru. They who love the Name are the true singers of God's praise; they appropriate the true $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ and reflect on the sabad; they sing the praises of God if the True Guru so wills.

There are verses or even single lines in which two or more of the terms are used. These lines and verses clarify the usage further. True is the $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{i}$ and' true the sabad; this realization comes through the Guru's grace. There is one bani, one Guru, and one sabad for reflection; true is the shop and true the merchandise; the storehouse is full of jewels. True is the praise, true the $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{i}$, and peace comes through the sabad. The gift of the Guru is banisabad. The bani of the Guru is meant for all the four directions; by listening to it one is absorbed in the true Name. The $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{i}$ of the Guru is understood through the Guru by getting dyed in the sabad.10 Thus, sabad and $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{i}$ become synonymous and tend to become synonymous with nām. Reflection on sabad-bāņī is a way of meditation on the Name. The equation of the Name with God and of sabad with God's revelation is not discarded, but there is much greater emphasis on the equation between sabad and bāṇī, that is, between the sabad of the Guru and Gurbāṇī.

111

In the $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of Guru Amar Das, the existence of congregational worship becomes explicit and emphatic. He refers to it as $s\bar{a}dh$ sangat, sat-sangat, sachch \bar{i} sangat, sachch sangat, sant-sangat or
Gur-sabh \bar{a} . The use of these terms is interesting. The last, that is,
Gur-sabh \bar{a} associates congregational worship clearly with the Guru.
The terms $s\bar{a}dh$ and sant are used for what is now commonly
called Sikh. The most frequently used term is sat-sangat which
emphasizes the character of the congregation as seen by the Guru.
As the 'true association' it stood distinguished from others. Indeed,
it is contrasted with kusangat which is the source of suffering:
there can be no sangat without the True Guru, just as there is no
liberation without the sabad."

The importance of the sangat is linked up with its nature and character. The one who is perfectly fortunate attains bairag through sādh-sangat. They who reflect on the sabad of the Guru, begin to entertain the fear of God. They come to the sat-sangat and sing the praises of God. By lodging God in their hearts they get rid of duality (dubidhā). They love the True One, their mind is true, and their bani is true. By serving the True Guru the mind is shorn of all impurities and the body becomes pure. By meeting the profound (Guru) one attains peace and happiness. By sitting in the true sangat one appropriates the true Name and the mind is stilled. Psychological rather than physical presence with the Guru is important for realizing the True Guru. The place where the praises of God are sung in sat-sangat is beautiful and it is dear to God. They who are immersed in truth turn to true devotion; to their great good fortune they appropriate the Name; they attaint God through the true sabad sung in the sat-sangat in the praise of God. All awareness comes by joining the sat-sangat; devotion to God is expressed through the sabad of the Guru; accepting the will of God one remains in peace and is absorbed in the truth. 12

The centrality of congregational worship in the Sikh way of life becomes evident from what Guru Amar Das says about the true association. He whom God dyes in his colour meets the sat-

sangat. True association springs from the True Guru and it leads to inclination towards the truth. All those who remain alien to this sangat live at the level of animals. They who forget their creator and remain without the Name are comparable to thieves. In the House of the Guru there is the treasure of the Name and its storehouse is filled with bhakti. The True Guru is the bestower of life; he is eternal. Day and night there is kīrtan through the medium of the Guru's sabad. The sabad of the Guru has been spoken for all the cosmic ages. He who turns to the Guru reflects on the sabad of the Guru and gets rid of the disease. But the manmukh remains in dubidhā all the time and suffers from the disease, like the rest of the world. God himself enables one to meet the satsangat and bestows greatness on him who lodges the divine Name in his heart. He who accepts the Guru's instruction never leaves the sat-sangat and appropriates the Name day and night. He who turns to the Guru receives the sabad in the sat-sangat. Guru Amar Das prays to God. There is only one ruler everywhere in the city, and every spot is sacred. 'I will sit where you ask me to sit and I shall go where you tell me to go. But, pray, keep me where I can sing of truth and attain bliss'. This obviously refers to the satsangat. Every gain comes from the sat-sangat; we get the opportunity through God's grace.13

What makes the sangat so important is the kīrtan, the singing of the Guru's sabad as a form of worship in congregation. Therefore, present in the sangat are the Sikhs of the Guru. There are references to the true instruction (sāchī sikh) of the True Guru and to the instruction (sikh) of the Guru. The Guru's instruction was embodied primarily in the Guru's sabad. It could also be delivered through a discourse. The words sākhī and kathā may be of some significance in this context. Guru Amar Das uses several terms for those who follow the Guru's instruction. We have already noted sādh and sant in connection with the sangat. The other terms used are bhagat and bairāgī. In a general way they are referred to as God's servants (Har ke chākar) or God's men (Har-jan). The servants of God are always in comfort; they

concentrate their minds on the feet of the Guru. God's men reflect on the Guru's sabad and aspire to attain the truth. They who serve God are Har ke log. Yet another term used for the Guru's disciple is sevak. The sevak serves only God through the sabad. Through the Guru's grace he becomes pure and casts away the self. Day and night he sings the praises of the True One, adorned with the sabad of the Guru. He alone can be called sevak who is prepared to give his head. The term sikh is also used as in 'they who live in accordance with the Guru's will are sikh, sakhā and bandhap'. A little more clearly it is stated that the Guru enables the Sikh to mingle with the Light. Finally, Guru Amar Das talks of the riddle (mundavani) of three things in the platter which, if eaten, lead to liberation: this rare food is found only in reflection on the Guru. This riddle was presented by the True Guru and it was solved by the Sikhs of the Guru. 14 The term Gursikh makes its appearance in the bānī of Guru Amar Das.

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However, the term used most frequently for the Sikh by Guru Amar Das is Gurmukh. More than 350 lines of his bānī open with Gurmukh. The term is used not only in the sense of 'by turning to the Guru' but also for the person who has turned to the Guru. We may cite a few examples. The Gurmukh remains absorbed in the sabad day and night. He cast & away the self. He who turns to the Guru meditates on the Name. The Gurmukh gets rid of his haumai. Adorning himself with fear (bhai) and loving devotion (bhagtī), the Gurmukh is comparable to a woman who never loses her husband. The Gurmukhs live by the sabad of the Guru and look beautiful at the divine door. Absorbed in the truth, the Gurmukh dies while still alive. Dedicated to the divine Name, the Gurmukh recognizes his real self. The Gurmukh accepts God's will. The Gurmukh gains the real wealth by reflecting on the sabad of the Guru. At a few places in his bani, Guru Amar Das dwells on the Gurmukh in several lines. For example, in Rāg Mārū he talks of the Gurmukh in fifty consecutive lines.15

IV

The Gurmukh of Guru Amar Das stands opposed to the manmukh. About 200 lines in the bani of Guru Amar Das start with manmukh. As we go through his bani we find that certain traits of the manmukh are repeatedly mentioned. He remains attached to the world and does not cultivate detachment (bairag, udas). He remains alien to the True Guru. His adornment is like that of a dohāgan (who never meets her husband). He is punished in the divine court for his misdeeds. Engrossed in falsehood, he never finds a place (in the divine court). The manmukh is alien to the sabad. He is comparable to a plant that withers without giving any fruit or shade. He incurs only suffering by acting in self-conceit (ahankār). The manmukh is alien to the divine Name. He is ignorant and follows the wrong path (kumārg). Blind to the right path he comes and goes (bound to the chain of death and rebirth); out of ignorance and pride he follows durmat. The more he reads the more he suffers because there is no liberation without the True Guru. Oblivious of the end, the manmukh regrets in the end.

Devoid of giān, he is attached to other than God. The manmukh suffers in the world due to his hostility towards the sants. Unaware of the thing within himself, the manmukh dies barking in darkness. He is selfish to the core and does nothing for others. He lacks understanding and goes out to search (for truth). He is hard-hearted and evil-minded. The manmukh offers devotion without the True Guru, but without the True Guru there can be no bhagtī. His life is a waste. The manmukh is a field in which suffering is sown and suffering is reaped. He loses all honour by indulging in slander. The manmukh does not realize that the Name has been revealed through the instruction of the Guru; he remains subject to haumai and māyā. He is foolish enough to talk ill of those who have been set right by the true sabad. The manmukh thinks that he is clever. 16 It is absolutely clear that in every conceivable way the manmukh represent the opposite of the Gurmukh. He is all that the Gurmukh is not, and he has no trait of the Gurmukh

It is significant that the learned pandit is mentioned explicitly as a manmukh. The manmukh is associated with sutak which too takes us back to the Brahman. There is hardly any doubt that the manmukh pandit follows the wrong path (kumārg). The Brahman is surely in the category of manmukh. In fact, the manmukh being the opposite of Gurmukh represents 'the other': this is the significance of the juxtaposition of the two. 17 In this context it becomes important to know what Guru Amar Das thought of the representatives of religious belief and practice in India during the sixteenth century.

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Guru Amar Das takes notice of the Brahmanical tradition. The pandit is mentioned in various contexts. He reads much and debates much, and without the Guru spreads illusion; without the sabad he cannot attain liberation; he remains chained to the cycle of 84 lacs of births. The pandit reads the Vedas and gives elaborate expositions but he remains entangled in māyā. He remains oblivious of the divine Name and receives punishment. He recites loudly and does not search for the Brahm within; he teaches others but he himself does not understand. He wastes his life and is reborn again and again. He expounds the Vedas, Shāstras and Smritīs but he remain in illusion and does not grasp the essence. Without serving the True Guru he gains no peace and multiplies suffering. Because of what he says and does, the pandit cannot attain the 'fourth stage' (which is beyond the three qualities). His ignorance keeps him in the dark all the time. The Vedas talk loudly of the three qualities of māyā. He who remains attached to māyā cannot have understanding. The essence of gods and goddesses is māyā which is also the source of Shāstras and Smritīs. The lust and anger prevalent in the world perpetuate the suffering of transmigration. The learned pandit remains alien to his own 'self'. The four Vedas were given to Brahma and he reflected on them. But poor Brahma could not understand the divine order (hukam) and remained occupied with hell and heaven, and with incarnations. The pandit sets himself up as the teacher (pādhā) without having the qualifications of a teacher. Himself entangled in māyā he keeps

others entangled in $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$. The daughter of his $jajm\bar{a}n$ is like his own daughter, but he receives remuneration for performing her marriage ceremony. The learning of the pandit does not lead to contentment. The reading of the Vedas does not remove the dirt. His pride is the result of his entanglement in $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$. The study of the Vedas does not lead to understanding of the Name. The Vedas dwell merely on good and evil deeds. The Shāstras and Smritīs do not lead to the goal of life. The pandit is advised to appropriate the way meant for the followers of the Gurus. 18

An obvious implication of the invitation to the pandit to adopt the Sikh way of life is the futility of his practices. The karm-kand is mere entanglement in māyā. He who entertains the notion of impurity (sūtak) can never perform a commendable deed or right worship. Pride (ahankār) is not eradicated by bathing on tīraths. Right thinking does not come by going to Kasi, nor does one get rid of one's wrong thinking. The Kasi is in the mind. All the sixtyeight tIraths accompany him who has lodged God in his heart. Only that sandhyā is acceptable which leads to the remembrance of God. Without realizing God, sandhyā, tarpan and gāyatrī lead to nothing but suffering. Drawn by consciousness of the divine is the true chaukā; the divine Name is the true food as the basis of human life. 'Were I to become a pandit-jotkI and read all the four Vedas, were I to be known in all the nine regions of the earth for my conduct and intelligence, and were my chaukā never made impure, but forget the true word (it would be a great misfortune); all chaukās are false, the only true entity is God. Guru Amar Das advises the pāndā to replace the fasts of Naomi, Dasmi, Ekadasi and Duadasi by appropriation of the truth to control his senses and to find the way to liberation.19

However, the pandit, the pādhā and the pāndā are not the only ones to be invited to the new path. The worshippers of Krishna are told to recognize God (Bhagwant) and their own self through the Guru's grace; they should control their mind and concentrate on the One; they should die in life; they should meditate on the Name so that they may attain liberation. There is no bhaktī in

dancing and jumping; only he attains bhaktī who dies through the sabad. There is a whole composition on dance in Rāg Gujrī. One should 'dance' for the Guru and in accordance with the Guru's will to get rid of the fear of Death. He who turns to the Guru becomes absorbed in the sabad and 'dances' through God's grace. They whom God enables to live in accordance with his hukam are the real bhagats and real giānīs. Only he 'dances' whom God likes.²⁰

There are still others who are bracketed with the pandit. They are in different garbs (bhekh), including the jogīs and the sanyāsīs. Then there are siddhs, sādhaks and maun-dhārīs. If the pandit is engrossed in māyā, the jogīs, jangams and sanyāsīs suffer from pride; their demand for alms is not confined to food and dress; they waste their lives in proud obstinacy (hath). Only he meditates truly who meditates on the Name by turning to the Guru. He who receives the Name by turning to the Guru is the real jogī and knows the real technique; one does not become a jogī by adopting the garb of a jogi. One may learn all the postures of the siddhs and control one's senses but the dirt of the mind is not removed so long as one does not get rid of haumai. Brahma, Bisan and Mahadeo remained engrossed in the three qualities and strengthened the hold of attachment. The pandit due to his learning and the mauni due to his pride remained attached to 'the other'. On this wrong path remained the jogīs, jangams and sanyāsīs: without the Guru they remain alien to the truth. The jogī, the pandit and the bhekh-dhārī stand bracketed as engrossed in māyā. And so are the pandit, the maunī and the bhekh-dhārī.21

Like the pandit, the $jog\bar{\imath}$ is addressed several times alone in the $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ of Guru Amar Das. He who reflects on $gi\bar{a}n$, gets rid of haumai, and does not thirst for $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ is the real $jog\bar{\imath}$. There is no jog in the saffron garb and no jog in dirty clothes. 'If I were to become a $jog\bar{\imath}$, wander over all the earth and beg from every home, what would be my answer in the divine court where account

is taken? The Name is my alms and contentment my cremation ground (marhī); the truth is my companion all the time. Nothing is gained through a garb and everyone remains subject to Death. Stick to the Name which alone is true'. In about fifty lines of ashtpadīs in $R\bar{a}g$ $R\bar{a}mkal\bar{i}$, Guru Amar Das enumerates nearly all the features of yoga and all the features of the Sikh way of life to invite the $jog\bar{i}$ to adopt the Guru's path.²² This comprehensive statement is very much similar to what we find in the $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of Guru Nanak. However, there is a significant difference. Guru Nanak's invitation to the $jog\bar{i}$ to adopt the true path is implicit. In the $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of Guru Amar Das it is made explicit. Rejection of yoga is built into the invitation.

We can see that the two major traditions of India, the Brahmanical and the ascetical, are rejected by Guru Amar Das. Less frequently though, the Vaishnava bhaktī is bracketed with them. We are left with the Islamic tradition. Guru Amar Das refers to darveshi to say that real darveshes are rare. They who beg from door to door are a blot on their garb and their life is a curse. They who discard hope and fear and turn to the Guru receive the alms of the Name. Is it an invitation to the Muslim mendicant to appropriate the Guru's path? Guru Amar Das addresses the saikh, asking him to discard the pride of power and to entertain the fear of God. He should pierce his hard heart with the (arrow of the) sabad so that peace is lodged in his heart. He who acts with peace in his mind finds a place with the Master. The saikh who wanders in all the four directions is asked to concentrate his mind on the One. He should forget 'here and there' and recognize the sabad of the Guru; prostrate himself before the True Guru who is the knower of everything; burn all hope and fear and live like a guest in this world. He should walk in accordance with the True Guru's will so that he may receive honour in the divine court. They who do not remember the Name, accursed is what they wear and what they eat.23 There is hardly any doubt that Guru Amar Das invites the representatives of Islam to follow the Guru's path.

V

Guru Amar Das leaves no doubt that the dispensation of Guru Nanak was meant to transcend all the known religious traditions. This becomes clear from his references to the Kaliyuga. Kīrat in the Kaliyuga is the light of the world. There is no karm or dharm for the Kaliyuga: there is no liberation without the Name. In the Kaliyuga, only they who turn to the Guru cross to the other bank. In this Yuga, the divine Name is the remover of fear; it is found by reflecting on (the sabad of) the Guru. Appropriation of the Name involves the acceptance the divine will. In the Kaliyuga, the Name is the treasure that is found through bhagt I and leads to bliss. Jam (Death) is all powerful in the Kaliyuga but he is not outside the Divine Order. He punishes the manmukh but those who turn to the Guru are safe. In all the four Yugas there is one treasure for the devotees of God. It is the divine Name. The dharm in the first three Yugas, respectively, was jat, sanjam and tIrath; in the Kaliyuga it is the praises of God through the divine Name. In this Yuga, the wealth of the divine is gained through bhaktI; the rest of the world remains in illusion. They who appropriate the Name attain liberation. But no one finds the Name without the Guru. Dharm stood firmly on four feet in the Satyuga. In the Tretayuga it stood on three feet and in the Duapur it was left with two. In the Kaliyuga it has only one foot. Its power is reduced to one-fourth. Māyā reigns supreme. The only source of redemption is the Name which is appropriated by meeting the True Guru. There is only One True Lord in all the four Yugas and the Name is supreme. In the Kaliyuga it is the only source of liberation. Not karm-kand but the divine Name is efficacious in the Kaliyuga. There is no other way (to liberation). There is no liberation without the Name. The greatness of the Name is well recognized for the Kaliyuga; it is received through the perfect Guru.24

Significantly, the season of Basant, which is the season of regeneration, reminds Guru Amar Das of the mind regenerated through the divine Name. They who sing God's praises remain in the Basant season. The regenerated world is liked by the True

Guru. The world is a garden and God is Basant. By implication, the Kaliyuga is the age of regeneration. In any case, in the Kaliyuga, the divine Name becomes manifest by turning to the Guru; the treasure of the Name is made manifest in the hearts of those who have taken refuge with the Guru.²⁵

Guru Amar Das talks of the burning world (jagat jalandā) in one of his verses. Addressing the jan, he says that he has woken up on hearing the sabad of the True Guru and a new feeling has sprung up within him. May the body without any merit burn because it does not work in the Guru's way. Engrossed in haumai and attached to the other, the world is burning. Not those who have turned to the Guru but others belong to the world which is burning. Guru Amar Das prays that God may save the world on fire through his grace. He goes on to add that God may save the world by whatever the means of redemption (jit duārae ubrae titae laehu ubār).26 The 'means' here is sometimes interpreted as any religious dispensation or spiritual path. This interpretation does not harmonize with the well considered and emphatically expressed view of Guru Amar Das that the only means of redemption in the Kaliyuga is the Name, that is, the dispensation of Guru Nanak. In fact the jit duārae line itself is followed by the statement that the True Guru has shown peace through reflection on the true sabad. Other than God there is no redeemer.

VI

In the $b\bar{a}n\bar{t}$ of the Guru Amar Das, God is uncompromisingly one. He created himself and, therefore, there is no other. The One alone is eternally true and there is no one else. Before the creation of the three worlds there was only the formless one (nirankār). He does not consult anyone; whatever he wills comes to pass. He created the universe and became the creator. He is the only doer (kartār). His is sargun and nirgun at the same time. The elements like air, water and fire, and all forms spring from him. All living beings are his and he is of everyone. Guru Amar Das emphasizes that God is in everyone and everywhere. He is out there in the

universe and he is within every human frame. There is no other entity even remotely comparable with him.²⁶

Two attributes of God are referred to very frequently: his omnipotence which is expressed in his hukam and bhāṇā, and his omnipresence which finds specific expression in his grace. The Fearless One (nirbhau) is always kind. The body and the soul are his gifts; he is the only giver of gifts for all and he shows the right path to those who go astray. He does everything and his hukam prevails everywhere. He whom God shows his grace (nadar) attains liberation. They who recognize God's hukam receive peace and comforts of all kinds. The only giver is the only friend. Everything appears through his hukam and everything disappears through his hukam. He is the only Lord of all, there is no other. All have only one Master. Through his grace he shows the right path.²⁷

God is the True King. His rule is eternal. In all the four Yugas there is only one rulership $(p\bar{a}tsh\bar{a}h\bar{i})$ and only one command (amr). God is the king of kings. There is no one above him. There is only one who heads the government of the universe and he alone issues the orders. Compared with the true king, the rulers of the world pale into insignificance. 'Do not call them Rajas who fight and die on the field of battle; they assume birth again and again' (like ordinary men). God has spread the true umbrella over the heads of *bhagats* who enjoy real $p\bar{a}tsh\bar{a}h\bar{i}$. He who turns to the Guru finds the rulership of the world. The real $p\bar{a}tsh\bar{a}hs$ are they who are dyed in the Name; all other $p\bar{a}tsh\bar{a}h\bar{i}s$ are false.²⁸

The 'service of the other' (vidānī chākarī) acquires a certain degree of significance in this context. Primarily, the phrase refers to the spiritual realm in which God alone is to be worshipped (and not any god or goddess); 'the other' is equally applicable to māyā or God's creation as distinct from God. At the same time, the service of a temporal king does not command the sole affiliation of God's devotee, his servant. Guru Amar Das makes some personal statements. 'For me, there is no one else like you; there is no one else so great'. The Name of God is my father, my mother, every kin and brother. 'For me, there is only one giver and no

other'. 'I have seen the whole world; there is only one giver'. 'Recognize the essence, O my mind; you are the form of light'. 'My prayer is to the Lord; you are the true Master'. We find all the nine treasures if we live in accordance with his will. 'Keep me as you wish, my Master; this is your greatness'. Guru Amar Das's personal statements indicate his disposition towards God as much as his conception of God. The trinity known as Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh is God's creation. Guru Amar Das's devotion cannot be addressed to anyone of them, or their incarnation. Indeed, $r\bar{a}g$ and $n\bar{a}d$ as symbols respectively of Vaishnava bhaktī and Gorakhnāthī yoga are discarded in favour of the service of God and his sabad.²⁹

This does not mean, however, that Guru Amar Das discards the idea of bhagtI. It is commendable that one should perform bhagti in love and fear, and feel the presence of God all the time. Adornment with love and fear is commendable for following the right path. God should be remembered, and bhagt should be performed in love and fear. Two saloks of Guru Amar Das underscore the importance of fear (bhai). Bhagtī is found by turning to the Guru and one can die in life. Bhagtī does not spring without fear and the mind does not become pure. Adorned with fear and bhagtī one may attain the state of a sohāgan by turning to the Guru. Bhagtī becomes possible by turning to the Guru and one dies to live through bhagtī. True bhagtī transforms men into gods. Bhagtī cannot be performed without fear; love and fear inculcated by the sabad lead to bhagtī. Through God's grace one may perform bhagtī and obtain eternal peace.30 On the whole, thus, bhagtī in the bani of Guru Amar Das is associated with awe in acknowledgement of the omnipotence of the one only Lord. What is more important, the way of bhagtī is found from the Guru and through the Guru's sabad. In other words, Sikh bhagtī is not the same thing as Vaishnava or Shaiva bhagti.

As we noticed earlier, the bhagat of Guru Amar Das is a Sikh of the Guru. The Name is the only source of honour and

'My true Lord is the destroyer of demons; the bhagats are saved through the sabad of the Guru'. Singing praises of God in accordance with Gurmat, the bhagats look beautiful. The bhagat are happy, being dyed in the true sabad. They meditate on the Name. One may be called bhagat by everyone but bhaktī is not found without serving the True Guru and then one may have the perfect fortune of meeting the Lord. Obviously, all Sikhs of the Guru are bhagats.

Guru Amar Das refers to the path and the goal for the Sikh of the Guru. The mind is conquered through the sabad of the Guru. Haumai is eradicated by recognizing the sabad. One prays for being enabled to sing the praises of him who is the bestower of the body and the mind. The great warrior is he who destroys the enemy known as ahankar. The detached devotee meditates on the Name. The object is to remain pure amidst the impurities of the world so that one's light mingles with the Light. One becomes liberated by serving the liberated. By the instruction of the Guru, lodging God in the heart, one becomes indifferent to joy and sorrow. The fear of the True Guru removes all illusion and fear, and one recognizes the sabad through God's grace. The goal is liberation-in-life. The servants of God concentrate on the feet of the Guru. The Guru's darshan leads to the state of liberation. The devotee takes refuge in the True Guru and dedicates his body and mind to him; he gives up his caste. He bathes in the pool of nectar that is within him. By recognizing the divine hukam, one does not entertain any hopes for oneself. One should be ready to give one's head. The service of the Guru is labour of love; one serves in the fear of the Lord. The service of another is a curse. The jan of God attains liberation and enables others to attain liberation. Liberation-in-life is attained through the divine Name and the Guru's sabad. The cup of the love of the Master is drunk through God's grace. They who conquer their mind conquer the world. They who have lodged God in their hearts by turning to the Guru, for them there is always the season of regeneration.³²

What is emphasized by Guru Amar Das more than anything else is dying-unto-self for attaining liberation-in-life. The terms often used by Guru Amar Das are jīvat marae, sabad marae, Gur ke sabad jīvat marae, āp chhor jīvat marae, jīvan marnā, mar mar jīvae, jīvat marae marae phun jīvae, sabad maro phir jīvo sad hī ta phir marn na hoi, mue tin nā ākhiyae je Gur ke sabad samāyae, mar jīviya and jīvatiān mar rahiyae.33 Eradication of haumai by recognizing God's hukam and accepting his will is the basic idea of dying unto self. The devotee who dies unto himself has no desires and aspirations of his own. He is detached completely from the world; he lives in the world not for himself so much as for others. The terms frequently used for this state by Guru Amar Das are ghar hī māhi udās, greh kutumb māhi sadā udās, bikhiā māhi udās and vichae greh udās.34 The basic idea is that the Sikh of the Guru experiences liberation-in-life as a state of bliss but he does not remain inert or inactive; he performs his social duties in a spirit of selfless detachment for the welfare of others. He approximates to the divinity he worships and conducts his life in accordance with God's will.35 Clearly, Guru Amar Das's conception of liberation is the same as that of Guru Nanak and it is different from that of the known Indian traditions in which it is equated with inert bliss whether in life or after death.

The opportunity of liberation in life was open to all. Guru Amar Das rejects the differences of caste in this connection. Like the human frame, caste (jāt) does not go with one after death. He who recognizes the essence is the real pandit. He who serves the True Guru is dear to God; he is high (uttam) and his caste is the highest. Neither beauty nor caste goes with one to the next world; there, everyone is treated in accordance with one's deeds. Since all belong to God and to no other, none can be called bad or inferior (mandā). The jāt and patt of the bhagats is the Name. The worldly fame and caste will not go with you. By taking refuge in God the lowest become the highest. The same Lord is in all. None should be proud of one's caste. He who recognizes Brahm is a Brahman. Only fools take pride in caste and this pride is the source of all

God. The whole world is made of the same clay. The Potter makes pots of various kinds and none has the power to change their equal status. Guru Amar Das talks explicitly of both men and women in connection with the path of liberation.³⁶

VII

We may now turn to the Ānand.³⁷ It can be seen not only as the most lyrical but also as the most representative composition of Guru Amar Das. He sings of happiness and bliss on realizing God. On remaining with God all sorrows are forgotten. With God on his side all his affairs are set right. All gifts come from him and he bestows the supreme gift of singing his praises with the name lodged in the heart. The true Name removes all hunger and peace comes to the mind. The sants should love the sabad with the Name as their support. They would overpower the five adversaries and subdue the fear of Death. The Name is received through God's grace and one attains peace and bliss.

People talk of ānand but ānand is found through the Guru and his grace. All sins are washed away and the eyes are opened to giān. Attachment to the worldly things is removed. This is the ānand that one experiences through the Guru. Only they know it who receive it. They receive it through God's grace by appropriating the Name and accepting his will.

Guru Amar Das invites his dear sants to sing the praises of God together. We may reach him by entrusting our body and mind and all our material resources to him, and by obeying his hukam. To sing the true $b\bar{a}n\bar{l}$ is to obey the Guru's hukam. This is the way to sing praises of the ineffable One. God is not found by clever talk. The attractive $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, the source of illusion, is created by him to lure human beings. Guru Amar Das is a sacrifice to him who has created this sweet attachment. He cannot be found by clever talk. One has to appropriate the truth. The family does not go with anyone and there is no reason to remain attached to it.

The instruction of the Guru alone helps in the end. Therefore one should appropriate the truth.

God is inaccessible and unseeable and he alone knows himself. The living beings are his creation, his sport. He cares for them. The nectar which the munīs seek is found from the Guru. Through his grace he lodges the True One in the heart. They who find the True Guru they become free from greed, attachment and pride (labb, moh, ahankār). Only he to whom God is graceful receives the nectar from the Guru. The way of the bhagats is different from that of all others. They follow the hard path. They discard greed, attachment, pride and thirst in a quiet way and follow the path which is sharper than the edge of the doubleedged sword and narrower than the width of a hair. They discard their self through the Guru's grace and are consumed by the desire to attain to God. The way of the bhagats has been different from that of others throughout the ages. Guru Amar Das prays to God that he may follow his will. They whom he shows the right path follow his will. Only they meditate on God whom he attaches to the Name through his grace. We walk on the way which the True Lord determines for us.

This song of joy is the sabad heard from the True Guru. It is lodged in the hearts of those for whom it is decreed from the divine court. There are some who indulge in much talk but no one attains to God through mere talk. The True Guru proclaims the sabad as the song of joy. They who meditate on God by turning to the Guru become pure and their parents and the family, and all those who associate with them, become pure. They who recite, they who hear, and they who lodge it in the heart become pure. They become pure who meditate on God by turning to the Guru. The state of bliss (sahaj) does not spring from karm-kānd, and without attaining to this state the fear of Death does not vanish. The fear of Death does not vanish through any other means. The mind made impure by this fear cannot be washed clean by any other means. It is washed by attachment to the sabad and meditation

on God. The state of bliss springs from the grace of the Guru and only then the fear vanishes.

They who are clean from outside and dirty within, their life is wasted in a gamble. The thirst is a serious disease; it makes one oblivious of death. One does not listen to the supreme Name and wanders aimlessly. They who discard the truth and attach themselves to the false world, they waste their life in a gamble. The inward and outward purity is obtained by following the way of the Guru. Absorption in the truth keeps all falsehood away. The real vanjārās gain the jewel of the true purpose of life. They whose minds are pure remain with the Guru all the time. The Sikh of the Guru remains in his presence and concentrates his mind on him. Discarding his self, he devotes himself to the Guru and knows no one else. Guru Amar Das tells the sants that such a Sikh is face to face with the Guru (sanmukh). They who turn away from the Guru find no refuge. They find no liberation elsewhere. They wander from birth to birth and find liberation only when they turn to the True Guru and listen to the sabad. If you think deeply you realize that there is no liberation without the True Guru.

Guru Amar Das invites the Sikhs, who are dear to the True Guru, to sing the true $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$, the $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ of the Guru, which is supreme. It is lodged in the hearts of those to whom God is gracious. Drink this nectar, remain dyed in the love of God, and sing his praises. Always sing the true $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$. All $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ other than the $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ of the True Guru is unripe. Unripe is $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ other than the $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ of True Guru; all other $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ is unripe. Unripe are those who recite the unripe $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ and those who hear it; unripe is its exposition. They utter 'God' from their lips without knowing him. Their minds have been deluded by $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ and what they say does not carry conviction. Guru Amar Das reiterates that other than the $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ of the True Guru all $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ is unripe. The sabad of the Guru is the precious jewel. He who appropriates this sabad is absorbed in it. When the mind is attached to the sabad, one turns to the True One in loving devotion. God himself is the diamond, he himself is the jewel, and

he himself bestows the gift of understanding. The sabad is the jewel and the diamond.

God himself created Shiv and Shakti and he himself governs the universe. He himself disposes, and watches his sport. Only a few understand this by turning to the Guru. They who lodge the sabad in the heart, their attachment is snapped and they attain liberation. Through God's grace alone one turns to the Guru and dedicates oneself to the One. The doer (kartā) himself makes his devotees understand his hukam. The reality is not known by reading Smritīs and Shāstras or by notions of pāp and punn; the reality is not known without the Guru, it is never known. The world is in the illusion of the three qualities, and the whole life passes in illusion. He who is awakened by the Guru's grace dedicates himself to God and sings the nectar-like bānī. Only he comes to know the reality who keeps awake throughout his life and remembers God day and night. The giver of all gifts should never be forgotten. He who remembers him comes to no harm. God himself leads to loving devotion through the Guru. The giver of such gifts should never be forgotten. The distraction of māyā leads to thirst; attachment to māyā results in the second affiliation (dūja bhāo). They who are dedicated to God through the Guru's grace they attain to God in the midst of māyā. God is a priceless treasure. He is found by meeting the True Guru to whom one offers one's head and annihilates one's self. Only the fortunate ones find this priceless treasure.

The mind is the *vanjārā* and God is the capital. This capital is found from the True Guru. All profit comes from the remembrance of God. This wealth comes through God's grace. With God as the capital, the mind becomes a true *vanjārā*. The thirst of the tongue is not slaked by things other than the taste of God. This thirst is slaked by nothing but the taste of God. After the gift of the taste, there is no thirst. This gift is received through God's grace by meeting the True Guru. All other pleasures are forgotten when God is lodged in the heart.

The human body comes into the world after the divine light

is placed in it by God. He himself is the mother and the father; he created the soul and showed the world. Through the Guru's grace comes the realization that the world is ephemeral. What is ever lasting is the light which is placed in the body at the time of creation. Love springs from the realization of God within. Sing his praises, he has made the body a temple. By singing his praises all suffering and sorrow stay away. Realization of God comes by attachment to the Guru's feet. The divine music is heard through the Guru's sabad and by tasting the divine Name. God himself is the doer and only through his grace one finds him. Only he who devotes himself to the Guru becomes acceptable to God.

The light in the eyes has been placed to see nothing but God. The eyes should see God everywhere. The world around is a form of God; through his grace it can he be seen. Through the grace of the Guru it is realized that God is one and there is no other reality. Without this realization the eyes remain blind; by meeting the True Guru the eyes are opened to the reality. The ears are meant to hear the praises of the True Lord. They should hear the true $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$. He who hears the true $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ his mind and body are regenerated. The state of the unknowable cannot be described. By listening to the nectar-like Name the ears are purified; they are meant to hear the praises of the True Lord. Placing the soul in the body as a cave, God has breathed air into it. The nine doors were made manifest by striking the musical instrument of the air. The tenth door was kept concealed. It is revealed to some through the Guru. They see God in innumerable forms, and there is no limit to his manifestation.

Guru Ram Das says that this true song of joy should be sung in the true house where truth is meditated upon. Through God's grace the truth is realized through the Guru. This truth is the Master of everyone and the Master bestows it upon those whom he likes. This true song of joy should be sung in the true house. We may be sure that this true house is the *sangat*.

Guru Arjan invites the Sikhs to listen to the \bar{A} nand so that all their wishes are fulfilled. They reach God and all their sorrows

vanish. By listening to the true $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{\imath}$, all sorrows, disease and curses vanish. Through the perfect Guru, the sants are drenched in joy. The True Guru himself is present in this $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{\imath}$; he who listens to it and utters it becomes pure. Guru Arjan reassures that by attachment to the feet of the Guru the divine music of joy is struck within.

VIII

One feature of the $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ of Guru Amar Das which cannot be expected to occur in the $\bar{A}nand$ is his awareness of the slanderers of the $s\bar{a}dh\bar{u}s$ (the Sikhs of the Guru). It is logical for Guru Amar Das to reassure them that God is on the side of the bhagats. One of God's concerns is to protect his devotees. He is the protector of the bhagats and has been protecting them in all the Yugas. God is the protector of his bhagats and saves their honour. It is in this context that Guru Amar Das gives an extended reference to Prahlad. He whose Master is all powerful cannot be destroyed by anyone. Since there is no one above him, his devotee does not have to be afraid of anyone. There is also the prayer to the True Master that he may punish those who slander his devotees $(d\bar{a}s)$.

There were true worshippers of One God in the past ages. In the Kaliyuga itself there were *bhagats* before Guru Nanak. The fact that they belonged to the lowest castes showed that caste did not stand in the way of liberation, and that the low caste were as dear to God as the high caste. They figure in the $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ of Guru Amar Das for the first time. They are seen as important individuals but not as the precursors of the Sikh movement in any sense.

There is hardly any social comment in the $\bar{A}n$ and. This, however, is not true of the rest of the $b\bar{a}n\bar{l}$ of Guru Amar Das. There is a comparison between well-water and rain, which can be interpreted as referring to the difference between the scriptures in Sanskrit and the $b\bar{a}n\bar{l}$ of the Guru. This comparison has a social dimension: in one case the scripture is meant for a limited number of people and in the other, it is meant for all, including the lower castes and even the outcaste. Furthermore, the persons who turn to this $b\bar{a}n\bar{l}$ are transformed into gods or superior human beings.

The tables are turned: those who do not appropriate the Name are low (in comparison with the Sikhs). In fact, they are compared with worms. 'We have become uttam by taking refuge in God; we are no longer $n\bar{l}ch$ '.³⁹

Then there are comments of another kind. Drunkenness is injurious for both physical and spiritual health. There is adverse comment on the red colour for dress: it symbolizes sensual pleasures. There is adverse comment on the notion of auspicious and inauspicious days and times, which throws astrology overboard. This notion is opposed to the sabad of the Guru. There is condemnation of female infanticide. Then there is reference to the various modes of disposing the dead. It may be merely contextual but the implication that these rituals are important cannot be ruled out. There is disapproval of the practice of sati much against the cherished ideal of the Brahmans and the upper caste people. Devotion to the living husband is preferable to becoming satī.40 There is no doubt that this idea gives strength to the family as a patriarchal institution but it does not minimize the importance of the disapproval of the practice. Altogether, the social comment in the bani of Guru Amar Das is quite considerable. It is indicative of his social concerns.

The Rāmkalī Sadd of Sunder should be seen in this context. Guru Amar Das clearly rejected the Brahmanical funerary rites and favoured their substitution by a ceremony which can certainly be seen as a Sikh ceremony.⁴¹ It is important to add that formal mourning of the traditional kind had been debunked by Guru Nanak. Guru Amar Das may be seen as taking the next logical step. The whole context is suggestive, indeed, that Ānand too could be recited on important occasions of a social character, like birth and marriage.

There is one small point which may be mentioned in connection with the bānī of Guru Amar Das. There is a single line in Salok Vārān To Vadhik: 'Lahaur sahr amritsar sifti da ghar.' It is commonly seen as a reference to the city of Amritsar. However, the city of Amritsar had not come into existence in the lifetime of

Guru Amar Das. Even the city that was founded by Guru Ram Das was known as Ramdaspur. The name Amritsar came into currency much later. In the bāṇī of Guru Amar Das, as in the bāṇī of Guru Nanak, amritsar is a metaphor.⁴²

NOTES

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- Sant Singh Sekhon, A History of Panjabi Literature, vol. I, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1993, pp. 79-85, 223-32.
- 3. Ibid., pp. 85-6.
- 4. Ibid., p. 87.
- 5. Ibid., pp. 87-8.
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- 7. Balbir Singh Dil's Bānī Guru Amar Das Jī da Tīkā, published by the Punjab Language Department, Patiala, in 2004, is useful for a study of the bānī of Guru Amar Das. However, the references in this paper are given to the pages of Guru Granth Sahib. For references to Satguru and Guru in this paragraph, Guru Granth Sahib, pp. 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32.
- 8. Ibid., pp. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.
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- 10. Ibid., pp. 33, 67, 115, 158, 638, 645, 753, 770, 1044, 1065, 1286.
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- 12. Ibid., pp. 35, 69, 114, 120, 363.
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- 15. Ibid., pp. 125, 158, 230, 362, 428, 591, 650, 910, 1058-9, 1063, 1262, 1414.
- 16. Ibid., pp. 29, 31, 33, 34, 37, 66, 87, 89, 231, 314, 435, 441, 569, 570, 590, 643, 754, 755, 768, 852, 947, 1046, 1249, 1414.
- 17. Ibid., pp. 85, 128, 229, 230, 231, 317, 319, 337, 423, 559, 1277.
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- 20. Ibid., pp. 88, 116, 136, 158, 1054.
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- 22. Ibid., pp. 908-9, 911, 1088, 1420.
- 23. Ibid., pp. 550, 551, 646.
- 24. Ibid., pp. 145, 160-61, 229, 365, 513, 588, 797, 851, 880, 1129-30, 1131, 1175, 1176-7, 1334.
- 25. Ibid., pp. 651, 853.
- 26. Ibid., pp. 27, 30, 113, 128, 129, 425, 427-28, 508-09, 663, 757, 769, 842, 947, 953, 954, 1044, 1051.
- 27. Ibid., pp.' 27, 36, 65, 86, 122, 127, 232, 440, 512, 556, 757, 951, 1094, 1421.
- 28. Ibid., pp. 425, 590, 648, 769, 842, 947, 1046, 1055, 1413.
- 29. Ibid., pp. 112, 163, 365, 441, 509, 510, 517, 849, 949, 1333.
- 30. Ibid., pp. 34, 112, 149, 245, 426, 428, 589, 850, 911, 1333.
- 31. Ibid., pp. 69, 429, 770, 956, 1055, 1131.
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- 33. Ibid., pp. 33, 110, 123, 128, 129, 159, 245, 554, 600, 604, 643, 910, 956, 1066, 1132, 1170, 1174, 1257.
- 34. Ibid., pp. 26, 29, 123, 161, 232, 425, 426, 851, 949.
- 35. Ibid., p. 549.
- 36. Ibid., pp. 111, 128, 362, 363, 424, 425, 429, 514, 565, 663, 1128.
- 37. Ibid., pp. 917-22.
- 38. Ibid., pp. 516, 517, 587, 588, 601, 768, 842, 1154, 1155.
- 39. Ibid., pp. 90, 162, 426, 427, 565.
- 40. Ibid., pp. 426, 427, 554, 565, 648, 649, 772, 785, 787, 842, 843, 1413.
- 41. Ibid., pp. 923-4.
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6

THE BANI OF GURU RAM DAS

As an integral part of Guru Granth Sahib, the banl of Guru Ram Das is incorporated in thirty Rags, besides the Rahiras and the Kīrtan Sohilā. The bānī of Guru Nanak and Guru Amar Das was in nineteen Rāgs: Srī Rāg, Mājh, Gaurī, Āsā, Gujarī, Vadhans, Sorath, Dhanāsarī, Tilang, Sūhī, Bilāval, Rāmkalī, Mārū, Tukhārī, Bhairon, Basant, Sārang, Malār, and Parbhātī. The bānī of Guru Ram Das is incorporated in eleven more Rāgs: Devgandhārī, Bihāgarā, Jaitsarī, Todī, Bairārī, Gaund, Nat-Nārāyan, Mālī-Gaurā, Kedārā, Kanara, and Kalyān. The addition of Rāgs is an important contribution in itself. The Ashtpadis of Guru Ram Das, his Chhants, his Solhe, and his Vars are in eighteen Rags. His shaloks are incorporated in the Supernumerary Shaloks as well as the Vars. Among the other forms of his bānī are pahrai, vanjārā, karhalae, and ghorian. Two modes of rendition are specifically mentioned: kāfī and partāl. Thus, the bānī of Guru Ram Das is important for both literature and music.

Guru Ram Das occupied the office of Guruship for about seven years from 1574 to 1581. In historical writings two major works are attributed to him: excavation of the sarovar known as 'amritsar' or 'Ram Das sarovar', and founding of the township known as Ramdaspur. The $b\bar{a}n\bar{l}$ of Guru Ram Das reflects his environment and provides important insights into Sikhism and the history of the Sikhs, especially in terms of ideology, institutions, and identity. We may concentrate on these aspects on the basis of his entire $b\bar{a}n\bar{l}$ of more than 5,500 lines in over 600 hymns.

H

Guru Ram Das refers to himself as the $dh\bar{a}d\bar{I}$ of God who was allowed access to the divine court and honoured with the robe of the Divine Name. As the $dh\bar{a}d\bar{I}$ of God, he sang his praises and invited others to meditate on the Name by turning to the Guru.² There can hardly be any doubt that God, and dedication to his Name, remain at the centre of the $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{I}$ of Guru Ram Das. Nevertheless, many of his contextual statements, metaphors, and similes relate to his physical, economic, social, cultural, and political environment. The reflection of this environment in the $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{I}$ of Guru Ram Das is partial but nonetheless important.

The metaphors, similes, and contextual statements of Guru Ram Das are sometimes conventional but mostly empirical. The universe consists of the earth, the sky, and the nether world (pātāl). There are fourteen bhavans, nine khands, seven continents and seven seas. There are the sun and the moon, the day and the night, mountains and hills, rivers and ponds, clouds with thunder and lightening, and heavy rain. The metals mentioned most frequently are iron and gold. Apart from stones, there are diamonds, jewels, and pearls. To be frequently mentioned is dust.³

The rains of Sawan make the earth luscious green, and the spring (basant) regenerates all vegetation. There are trees with their branches and leaves; there are flowers and fruits; there are plants and grasses. The flowers mentioned specifically are the lotus, kasumbh, and the poppy. The birds specifically mentioned are the peacock, chātrik, swan, crane, parrot, crow and the pigeon. There are bhaurs and patangas, besides the common fly. The animals mentioned are elephants and horses, cows and calves, pigs and dogs, lions and goats, snakes and scorpions, the deer and the fish. There are ants and worms.

Metaphors and similes come from a large number of occupations. To figure most frequently are trade and agriculture. The $s\bar{a}hu$ provides capital for the $vanj\bar{a}r\bar{a}s$ who make profits or suffer losses; they have to render accounts. There are cities and towns with markets and $b\bar{a}z\bar{a}rs$, traders and shopkeepers, $sarr\bar{a}fs$

and moneylenders, sellers and buyers. There are artisans; there is merchandise; there are storehouses. Villages are founded and there are peasant proprietors, tenant cultivators, and day labourers. Kirsānī demands skills and care. There are fields for sowing and harvesting crops; there are wells to irrigate them. Watchmen protect the crops and guard the heaps of grain. Jaggery and sesame are specifically mentioned as agrarian produce. The gardens bloom. The saline soil is no good for cultivation.

The other occupations which provide metaphors and similes for Guru Ram Das are those of the potter, the oil-presser, the dyer, the vaid, the fisherman, the gardener, the boatman, the waterdiviner, the sūtardhār, and the prostitute. The potter's wheel goes round and round to make vessels. The bullock of the oil-presser goes round and round in blindness. The dyer's vat is used for imparting fast colours: the majIth and the red chalūlā (like the poppy flower) are preferable to the bright but fast-fading kasumbh. The vaid identifies the disease and provides medicine. The curse of leprosy and the ailments like fever and migrane are mentioned. The fisherman spreads his net to catch the fish. The gardener looks after plants and flowers that are dear to his master. The boatman takes people across the river, or the sea. The waterdiviner discovers underground water for wells. The sūtardhār introduces the story to be enacted. The prostitute does not know the father of her child.

Some of the metaphors and similes come from the human body itself: the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the teeth, the head, the hair, nakedness, and lifelessness. The blind and the dumb stand disadvantaged. The body is the field of righteous action; it is the receptacle of divinity. The family represents the most important social institution. The katumbh and the kul figure frequently and so do father and mother, husband and wife, brothers and sisters, relatives, guests, and friends. The young girl and her friends, the mother-in-law, the son-in-law and his parents, the elder and younger brothers of the bridegroom, and the widow can be added to the list. The infant's need for milk and the mother's

anxiety for the son are emphasized. The ceremonies of betrothal and marriage, the dowry, and the bridal bed are important metaphors. Beauty and status are regarded as relevant for matrimony. Songs of joys are sung on all happy occasions. The women differ in their physical appearance; what makes them noble is their dedication to the husband. The devoted wife is preferable by far to the indifferent. The wife adorns herself to please the husband. The family is clearly patriarchal.

The social order is inegalitarian. There are rich, propertied persons who enjoy high social status. There are the high caste Brahmans and Khatrīs, and the low caste Vaishyas and Shūdras. Then there are the casteless, like the Chandāls. There are professional scribes, personal servants, wageless labourers, grooms, thieves, beggars, and slaves. Some of the similies come from the wrestling arena, gambling, and the place of learning. These are not the only images of secular life. There are others like the ankush, the necklace, the lamp, and the thread that runs through the beads. From the concepts of time and space come four or ten directions, the four ages, and eight watches of the day-and-night. From the daily life come food and dress. The rich wear silk.

The religious life reflected in the $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ of Guru Ram Das relates largely to Brahmanical dispensation: $t\bar{\imath}rath$, barat, jagg, punn, and $p\bar{u}j\bar{a}$. Apart from the four Vedas, eighteen Purānas, six darshans, Smritīs and Shāstras, there are references to jap, tap and sanjam, 33 crores of gods, sixty-eight places of pilgrimage, and the most sacred rivers. Brahma, Vishnu and Mahadev appear as God's creatures. Apart from the Pandit, there are Siddhas, Munīs, Sādhs, Sanyāsīs, Jogīs, and Jangams. Transmigration is taken for granted. The presence of Vaishnava $bhakt\bar{\imath}$ is indicated by references to singing and dancing for worship. There is no reference to Islam.

The representatives of Islam figure in connection with the state as emperors. There are other categories of people who wield power, like the dīwāns, the khāns, the maliks, and the umarā.

Then there are Bhūpats, Rājās, Rāos, and Rāṇās. There are local administrators (shiqdārs and chaudharīs) and there are collectors of tax (jagātī). Courts are held and orders are issued. Justice is sought and punishment inflicted. There are forts, palaces, gates, and pillars. There are mints for striking coins.

III

The theology of Guru Ram Das is essentially the same as the theology of Guru Nanak. It forms the core his $b\bar{a}n\bar{\iota}$. The basic ideas are put forth in the So-Purakh. The Supreme Being is the one Supreme Reality, the Primal Purakh who has no equal. He is immaculate, inaccessible, immeasurable, ever constant, immutable, and changeless. He is the sole creator and the sole provider. Pervasive in all creatures, he abides within all. None besides him operates in the universe. All happens that he wills. All creation is brought into being by him and disappears into nothingness by his decree. Some he makes donors and others he makes beggars. He annuls all suffering. He is free from fear and they who meditate on him become free from fear. Union and alienation are in his power. Realization of God comes to those who by him are enlightened. He is made manifest by the Guru's grace.

The ideas expressed in the *So-Purakh* are reinforced in many other compositions, with a slightly greater emphasis on God's immanence than His transcendence. The Primal Purakh is beyond all reach; he is the sole formless Absolute. He is the sole creator, the sole cause and source of all things. He himself creates and dissolves creation. None but he has power and his ordinance is operative in the universe. He alone confers greatness. He has no form or feature and yet he pervades all creation. He himself shows his form and meditates on it. He himself is the Silent One and discourses on enlightenment. He himself is the voluptuary and the anchorite. He himself is Brindaban's milkmaids and Krishna grazing cows in the forest. He himself is the child who destroys Kansa. The depiction of God's immance in the bāṇī of Guru Ram Das is both detailed and frequent.

Guru Ram Das gives great importance to the Name. Like God, the Name at one level is immaculate and inaccessible; it is also pervasive and operative in all spots. The Name is our Lord; nothing is supreme over it. To be indifferent to the Name is to be indifferent to God. They who are forgetful of the Name are thoughtless and unfortunate egoists; they remain in the grip of Māyā. The jewel of the Name is found by God's grace. Meditation on the Name comes through God's grace. By putting faith in the Name one's clan and family are saved; one's suffering and hunger vanish. By fixing faith in the Name foul thinking is cast off, understanding dawns, egoism is shed, and all maladies are cured. Doubt is annulled by devotion to the Name and no suffering comes thereafter. The Name of the Lord is our father, mother, helper and friend.

The Name is enshrined in the Shabad. ¹⁸ The Name annuls fear and one acquires bliss through the Guru's *shabad*. ¹⁹ By listening to the Name' one finds peace; one's mind is fulfilled, nd all sorrow vanishes. ²⁰ Here the Name is assumed to be the Guru's *shabad*. All supranatural powers come from 'listening to the Name', and all one's desires are fulfilled. By 'listening to the Name' comes poise, and from poise comes joy. ²¹ By 'listening to the Name' comes purity and self-restraint; the self is illumined and realized; sins are annulled and truth is attained. ²²

The equation of the Name with the Shabad brings in the Guru. Devotion to the Name is acquired through the Guru's grace. Only they meditate on the Name who turn to the Guru. Only they laud the Name who are united to the Guru. By the Guru's guidance comes meditation on the Name. The Name is obtained from the Perfect Guru who reveals it in our heart. The gracious Guru instructs us in the Name. Rare are those who contemplate the Name by the Guru's guidance. The Name is uttered in the presence of the Guru. They who laud the Name by the Guru's guidance are universally acclaimed. The Name is lodged in the heart by the True Guru and its repetition leads the mind to bliss. Through great good fortune is the Name obtained by the

Guru's guidance.³³ They who are deprived of the touch of the Guru remain ignorant reprobates; by the guidance of the True Guru is tasted the nectar of the Name.³⁴ The Name signifies God at one level; at another, it signifies the Shabad which is identified with the *shabad* of the Guru.

Guru Ram Das uses 'sabad' for the Divine Ordinance, It is the same ordinance (eko sabad) everywhere. All are covered by His ordinance (sabad). The other terms used for the Divine Ordinance are hukam, bhānā, and razā. Nothing can be done on one's own; God keeps us as he likes. He who accepts the will (bhānā) of the True Guru attains union with God. He alone is the Master and everyone is subject to his Ordinance (hukam); He does what he likes (bhavai) and all have to submit to his will (razā). Here hukam, bhānā and razā are used as synonyms.

God's bhāṇā tends to merge with his grace. Whomsoever he likes he unites with himself'.40 By living in accordance with the will of the True Guru one may receive a berth in the boat.41 The terms generally used for grace are nadar, kirpā, prasād, and $d\bar{a}y\bar{a}$. One may receive the gift of loving devotion through the Guru's grace (nadar).42 The one on whom the beloved looks with grace (nadar) meditates on the feet of God. 43 Through the grace (kirpā) of the True Guru one may meet God; through the grace (dāyā) of the Guru one may meet God.44 It is through God's grace (kirpā) that one serves the True Guru.45 It is through the Guru's grace $(kirp\bar{a})$ that one realizes the eternal, inscrutable, and infinite Beloved.46 Through the grace (kirpā) of the bestower of peace (sukhdātā) one may receive the word (bachan) of the True Guru.47 Everyone wishes to see God but only they see him whom He shows himself; only through the grace (nadar) of the beloved one turns to God.48 The phrase 'Gurprasadi' occurs frequently in the bānī of Guru Ram Das. The Guru's grace is as important as the grace of God. The emphasis on grace is slightly more than on the Divine Ordinance.

ſV

Guru Ram Das has much to say about the Sikh institutions which were developing during the sixteenth century. One of these was the institution of Guruship itself. Closely linked with it was the status of Gurbāṇī. The third was the Sikh sacred space where the Sikhs congregated for worship. It was called *dharamsāl*. More often, however, it was referred to as *sangat* or *satsangat*.

Guru Ram Das generally talks of the Guru, the True Guru, and the Perfect Guru. There is hardly any doubt that any of these terms can refer to God. It is even more certain that each one of these three terms can refer to the personal Guru, that is, Guru Nanak and his successors. Indeed, most of the time Guru Ram Das appears to refer to the personal Guru. We may refer to some of the statements actually made in his banī. God himself is the True Guru; he himself is the disciple; He himself gives instruction. 49 As the True Guru, God himself effects the union.50 Liberation is not possible without the True Guru.51 Govind is the Guru and the Guru is Govind: there is no difference between them. 52 Guru Ram Das refers to Guru kā bhāṇā just as he refers to Guru kā sabad or Guru kā bachan.53 The service of the True Guru is real service only when one lives in accordance with the wishes of the True Guru.54 The True Guru is the real sādhū.55 The Guru is the real $s\bar{a}dh\bar{u}$. The disciple of the Guru dedicates his life to the Guru: 'I have placed my body and mind at the disposal of the Guru; I have sold my head at a very high price's' This high price is nothing short of liberation. Only through God's grace may one sell one's head to the Guru.58 The Perfect Guru reveals God; union is attained by selling the head to the Guru.59 We are like uninstructed children; the Guru, the True Guru, is the instructor who makes us wise through his instruction.60 The Guru instructs that māyā does not go with you in the end.61 The Guru gives the sword of giān to kill death itself.62 On meeting the Perfect Guru, one may see God's presence.63 The love of the Name comes through the True Guru.64

Significantly, Guru Ram Das refers specifically to his predecessors. The use of the term 'Guru Nanak' in the last line of

a hymn may refer to Guru Ram Das as well as to Guru Nanak. One finds Nanak as the Guru through the divine writ.65 The servants of God seek refuge in Nanak as the Guru.66 Through the divine writ in one's favour, Nanak the Guru becomes gracious and effects union with God.67 By divine writ one may meet Guru Nanak.68 Guru Nanak seems to represent his dispensation through his bani and his successors. Great indeed is Guru Nanak who looks upon all with the same concern and who is above praise and blame.69 Nanak is the Perfect Guru; one meditates on the Name by meeting the True Guru. 70 Guru Ram Das refers to the House of the Jagat Guru Nanak and its four generations from Guru Nanak to Guru Ram Das himself.71 The generations from 'Guru Baba' and 'Guru Angad' to the third and the fourth are mentioned elsewhere too.72 Obviously, Guru Ram Das is quite aware of his office as a personal Guru.

As it may be expected, he talks about his immediate predecessor, Guru Amar Das, as frequently as about the founder of the House. The epithet 'true Guru' is used for Guru Amar Das.73 There is a reference to his langar.74 There is a reference also to a hostile ascetic who sends his son to participate in the celebration of the completion of the boalī at Goindval.75 The most important statement refers to Guru Amar Das's visit to the traditional places of pilgrimage. He visited Kurukshetra at the time of the solar eclipse (in 1553), accompanied by numerous disciples. 'In order to redeem the world did the True Guru undertake the pilgrimage to this bathing place'. The whole world came out to behold him. Annulled were the sins of those who had the touch of the Prefect Guru. Jogis, Sanyāsis, and lain monks, the followers of the six orders, had dialogue with him. The Guru then chanted the Divine Name on the Jamuna; all who followed him were exempted from tax. On the Ganga, the eminent people of the town sought shelter with the True Guru, seeing in him the image of God. Through the Guru's shabad and his teaching they became devotees of God. 76 It is clear that the purpose of his visit to the sacred places was to spread the message of the Sikh faith.

A verse of Guru Ram Das is addressed to the son. It is interpreted as his admonition to Prithi Chand." Possibly, Prithi Chand did not accept with grace the nomination of his younger brother to Guruship. The installation of Arjan as the Guru was an important event of the life of Guru Ram Das. What he had received from his father-in-law he passed on to his son, initiating the line of Sodhi Gurus.

On the whole we find that though the equation of the Guru with God is there, the concern of Guru Ram Das is not so much with the theosophical or theological dimension of this equation as with the institutional Guruship or Guruship as an institution. The third successor of Guru Nanak looks upon his office in empirical as well as ideological terms. What comes to the fore is the personal Guru.

This does not mean that the personal aspect of Guruship has become more important than the impersonal. The Shabad-Guru comes into parallel prominence with the personal Guru. There is no doubt that shabad is used for divine self-revelation, as for hukam at places. 78 Greatly fortunate are they who serve the True Guru and remain absorbed in the One through the true shabad.⁷⁹ Here the sabad may be taken to refer to divine self-revelation. Elsewhere, however, the sabad is equated clearly with the sabad of the Guru when the terms used are Gurvāk, Satgur-bachan, and Gursabad in the context of satsangat. 80 Similarly, the word banī may be treated as a synonym for sabad. The sants are told, for example, to serve God whose $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{\imath}$ is supreme. 81 The $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{\imath}$ of the one who has turned to Divine Preceptor is the Name.82 The bāṇī of the True Guru is a gift coming from God.83 However, like the sabad, bāṇī is used also for the bāṇī of the Guru in the context of satsang.84

Indeed, sabad and bāṇī for Guru Ram Das are most often simply Gurbāṇī. Jan Nanak utters the bāṇī replete with merit; through Gurbāṇī one is absorbed in the Name. The bāṇī of the

True Guru is the nectar-word (amrit-bachan); whoever recites it quaffs amrit.85 The bani of the bhagat jan is supreme.86 By listening to the amrit-bani of the bhagat jan one contemplates God.87 The Har-jan is supreme and so is his banī; he utters it for the benefit of others. 88 The use of the terms bhagat jan and Har jan does not mean that the reference is not to Gurbānī. In any case, there is a direct reference to Gur kī bānī: they who turn to it in love are redeemed in this world and the next through the grace of the creator.89 By constant uttering of Gurbānī, God is lodged in the heart.90 Devotion arises from tasting the sabad of the Guru in the sangat; both the body and the mind are regenerated by praising God through Gurbāṇī.91 Gurbāṇī and Guru kā sabad stand equated here, and elsewhere. 92 Through great good fortune may we meet the Guru and be redeemed through the Guru's sabad. We may know God through the Guru's bachan.93 Gurbānī shows the unseeable God.94 The banī of the True Guru is the embodiment of truth, and one becomes true through Gurbāṇī. Gurbāṇī is one's support and one should remain attached to it.95

Guru Ram Das refers to the imitators and their raw and false compositions. From Gursikhs are told to regard the $b\bar{a}n\bar{l}$ of the True Guru alone as true: God himself inspires him to speak. Indeed, ' $b\bar{a}n\bar{l}$ is the Guru and the Guru is $b\bar{a}n\bar{l}$; all amrits are in the $b\bar{a}n\bar{l}$ itself'. Ust as in the equation of God with the True Guru the institutional Guru is brought to the fore, so in the equation of the Guru with the Sabad, the sabad as Gurbānī is brought to the fore.

We may note that the attitude of Guru Ram Das towards the Rags in relation to Gurbānī is highly significant. Sorath, for example, is fine if it helps one to search for the Name, celebrate the Guru, and meditate on God through Gurmat. Elsewhere Guru Ram Das says: 'I have sung the praises of the Supreme God using the Bilāval Rāg as my blowing horn'. The implication is clear: a Rāg has no sanctity in itself; it is sanctified only when it is used for praising the Lord. This attitude is in consonance with the attitude of Guru Nanak and Guru Amar Das. The point is explicitly

made: 'Of all musical measures that one is noble wherewith the Lord abides in the heart. Such melody and music has value beyond expression. But the Lord is above the reach of melody and music. Realization of his ordinance does not come through them. Blessed is music for those who realize the ordinance. Such realization comes from the True Guru'. ¹⁰¹ This sets the relationship between Gurbāṇī and the Rāg on a firm footing: primary in Gurmat sangīt is Gurbāṇī itself; the Rāg is secondary. The Rāg acquires relevance and significance only to the extent it serves the basic purpose of Gurbāṇī. This may be treated as the fundamental principle of Gurmat sangīt.

Gurbānī was meant to be sung in congregation (sangat). There are references to the sangat of sants or sādhs but far more frequently the term used is sat-sangat, the true association for the Guru and his Sikhs. One listens to the kathā of God in the sangat and meditates on the ineffable God. 102 The banī is recited in the sangat and the praises of God are sung; this medicine (aukhad) removes all kinds of disease and suffering. 103 Daily one listens to the kathā of the Divine Name in the sangat; by singing the praises of God one swims across the ocean of life; one utters Gurbani in the sangat and quaffs the nectar of Har-kathā. 104 It is quite obvious that sangat meets in the dharamsāl. The Guru gives instruction in the kathā of God; one meditates on God in the sangat, and meets God. The Guru utters amrit-bāṇī and his Sikhs love it; the True Guru gives instruction in the interest of others, 105 As Bhai Gurdas actually tells us, we can visualize Guru Ram Das performing kIrtan in the midst of the amritsar in Ramdaspur. The sangat, by implication, is the divine court. 106 One joins the sangat through great good fortune and all one's affairs are set right by the Name. 107 One meets other Sikhs in the sangat to sing the praises of God, and everyone yearns to see the Guru. 108 Desolate is their life who have not taken refuge in the Guru's sangat.109 Through great good fortune one joins the sangat and cultivates the love of God; day and night one remains absorbed in God and regards joy and sorrow alike; the love of God is cultivated in the sangat through great

good fortune. The treasure of the Name is in the sangat where one meets God; through the Guru's grace one's innerself is lighted and all darkness disappears; iron is transmuted into gold by the touch of the True Guru. Only in the sangat does one find the wealth of the Name; it never diminishes, is never stolen, and never taxed. The true sangat of the Guru where one tastes the pleasure of God is dear to God.

Guru Ram Das looks upon worship in the sangat as the only form of worship that leads to liberation. In any case, it is more efficacious than the way of the JogIs and the path of the Vaishnavas. The Jogī strums the gut but his harp sounds hollow. His heart can be drenched in joy only by the Guru's instruction. The songs that the Jogī sings and his manifold utterances are only play of the mind: the bullocks he yokes to the wheel to irrigate the field eat away the tender shoots. Guru Ram Das prays to God that the heart of each may bend to divine devotion. 114 It takes long to bring bells and cymbals and to tune the rebeck. Far better it is to use this time in contemplation of the Name. It takes long to collect notes and to tune melody of the measure. Far better it is to use this time for laudation of the Lord. It takes long to stretch hands to form poses. Far better it is to use this time to contemplate the Divine Name. In the true association of God's devotees should one sing the praises of God. Thereby illumination would come and darkness would be lifted. The devotees of God should 'dance the dance of contemplation'.115 The Sikh way is far preferable to that of the Jogis and the Vaishnava bhaktas. The sangat is the school (chatsal) of the True Guru: one learns to appreciate the attributes of God in the sangat. 116 In the sangat is God. 117

V

The Sikh of the Guru (Gursikh) has a distinct identity in the $b\bar{a}nI$ of Guru Ram Das. We are familiar with the hymn which refers to the daily routine of the Sikh: 'The disciple of the True Guru must rise at dawn and meditate on the Name. At dawn he must rise and cleanse himself in the Name of God, bathing in the pool of nectar.

As by the Guru instructed he should then repeat the Name. All his sins shall be washed, with all his evil and foul doings. With the rise of the day he must chant the Guru's sabad. He should meditate on the Name in rest and in movement'. 118

This is only one of the numerous references to the Gursikh in the bani of Guru Ram Das. The Sikhs of the Guru have love of God in their hearts; they come to the Guru for worship and take away the Name as their profit; they listen to the instruction of the Guru and their haumai and dubidhā are eradicated; their faces are radiant with love.119 The Sikhs of the Guru have found that wonderful place where the True Guru sits; their labour has become fruitful through the Name; they who worship Guru Nanak are themselves worthy of worship. 120 Through the grace of Guru Nanak they meet God. 121 Praise be to those Sikhs who fall at the feet of the Guru, recite the Name of God, listen to the Name of God, appropriate the Name by serving the Guru, and live in accordance with the Guru's bhānā.122 The Sikh of the Guru propagates his instruction and there is no difference between them any longer: 'The Guru is the Sikh and the Sikh is the Guru'. 123 Through his instruction, the Guru assimilates the Sikh with himself; some remain in his presence to serve him, while others are sent away to perform tasks for the Guru. 124 This comes very close to saying that Guru Ram Das appointed his representatives to look after Sikh sangats at places away from Ramdaspur. Elsewhere, Gur kī kār is equated with Har kathā, making it an essential activity of the sangat. 125

In a stanza of the Vār of Sorath, the bhagat, sant, sādh, Gurmukh, and Gursikh are mentioned together. Gurbachan Singh Talib makes no distinction between them in his translation. They refer indeed to one and the same entity: the Sikhs of the Guru. It is important to note in the first place that Guru Ram Das refers to the Sikhs at places without using any of these terms. We are called the slaves of the True Guru'; we bear his mark branded on our foreheads'. As the slaves of the Guru they join the sangat and the bitter becomes sweet for them. The reference here is

obviously to the Sikhs. In Rāg Dhanāsarī, the sants and bhagats refer to the Sikhs. Guru Ram Das prays that the sins of all those who serve God may be washed and they be kept in the sangat dear to God. 128 The sant jan meditate on God and their suffering, illusion, and fear disappear through the instruction of the Guru (Gurmat). 129 In Rāg Rāmkalī, a number of terms are used for the Sikhs: Har ke log, Har jan, Har Ram jan, Ram-jan, sant, sant jan, sadh, sevak, and Gurmukh. Association with them turns crows into swans. 130 The men of God (Har-jan) meditate on the Name; Har and Har-jan become one. 131 God himself is the Guru, He himself is the disciple (chelā). 132 They who find God sweet are eminent among men; they are the supreme men of God; greatness and peace come through the Name of God, and this juice is tasted through the shabad of the Guru. 133 It is clear that Guru Ram Das refers to the Sikhs when he talks of sants, bhagats, and sadhs. The Guru himself is referred to as sādhū or sant.134

The Sikhs represent a tradition which itself is distinct. In the Kaliyuga dharma has only one leg to stand upon; peace comes by singing the praises of God through the sabad of the Guru that serves as the medicine (aukhad). Without the seed of the Name there can be no harvest in the Kaliyuga. The Perfect Guru lodges the Name in the heart. 135 The message of the Guru, thus, serves as the only leg of dharma in the Kaliyuga. Guru Ram Das makes the explicit statement that the service of the Guru, instruction of the Guru, and bhānā of the Guru represent a distinct way (eh chāl nirālī gurmukhī). 136 Only they find the Perfect Guru in the kaliyuga on whose forehead it was written from the very beginning.137 The foremost boon in the Kaliyuga is the Name. 138 The highest state in the Kaliyuga is attained through the kirtan of God, and we find God through the True Guru. Praise be to the True Guru who has made the Name manifest. 139 The best form of worship in the Kaliyuga is to praise God in accordance with the teaching of the Guru (Gurmat). 140 The best way to laud the Lord in the Kaliyuga is the Name: it is obtained through the teaching of the Guru. 141 The Name of God protects the honour of God's devotees in the

Kaliyuga.¹⁴² These references leave no doubt that the path of the Gurus is the most efficacious in the Kaliyuga, if not the only efficacious path.

The goal is liberation-in-life. The sākat is indifferent to God and remains entangled in māyā. The manmukh suffers from haumai. The sabad of the Guru is the antidote to the poison of haumai and māyā. 143 By dying to self, one lives to quaff the nectar of love, and through the Guru's grace attains liberation-in-life (jīvan mukt).144 To attain this objective, one should be ready to offer one's head to the True Guru.145 To live in accordance with the Guru's bhāṇā is to die while living; by dying-in-life one crosses the ocean of life and through the Guru's grace is absorbed in the Name. 146 The prayer of Guru Ram Das, therefore, is: 'keep me as you wish.147 The antidote to māyā is renunciation, but renunciationin-the-home (vichchai girh udās). 148 Another word for it is alipt (detached). 149 An alternative phrase for the ideal is: vich āsā hoi nirāsī. 150 Indeed, the life of a householder is better than that of an ascetic who begs from door to door. 151 That the Sikhs are and should be householders is taken for granted. In fact the compositions like the 'ghorian' can be appreciated in this context. The caparisoned mare, the saddle and the whip, the songs sung for the bridegroom, the marriage party, and the bride serve as metaphors or similes for the human birth, sabad of the Guru, the Name, Gur-giān, loving devotion, and meeting with God. 152 The marriage symbolizes union with God: it brings in the bridegroom, the marriage party, the bride and her friends, the natal home and the home of the in-laws, the rite of marriage, and the dowry. 153 The ceremony of betrothal is followed by the pādhā opening his patrī to look for the auspicious time (lagan, mahūrat), the marriage party coming home, and the performance of the wedding rite in which the bride and the bridegroom take rounds. 154 After this comes the composition known as lāvān which is now used for the Sikh wedding ceremony called Anand. 155 This rite of the passage appears to be important to Guru Ram Das precisely because the Sikhs are householders.

House-holding for the Sikhs stands sanctified. Normally, the hoarding of wealth brings torment. Mansions and palace do not go with anyone and steeds are of no use. 156 However, they who are devoted to the Name, their wealth, raiment, and food are sanctified. Approved are their homes, mansions, palaces and abodes. Approved are their steeds, saddles and haversacks. 157 The sacred rivers like Ganga, Jamuna, Godavari and Sarsuti yearn for the dust of the sādhū's feet to get purified. All the places of pilgrimage yearn for the dust of the sādhū's feet. In fact the whole creation yearns for this dust. It is received through God's grace. 158 They who have the support of God are no longer dependent on other people. 159 'We wash the dust of their feet and drink the water'. 160 Praise is to those who volunteer to serve the Guru. 161 They serve the sangat and think of the welfare of others. 162

Guru Ram Das recommends respect for everyone. The same light is in all, as all have been created by the same God; 'place your head underneath the feet of everyone'. 163 All can attain liberation, whether they are Khatri, Brahman, Sūd, Vais or Chandāl. It is in this context that Guru Ram Das gives the example of Namdev, Kabir, Trilochan, Ravidas, Dhanna, and Sain. 164 Ravidas is mentioned as a Chamiār. 165 Namdev is mentioned as a Chhīpā. 166 This was a declaration that the path of the Guru was open to all, including the lowest of the low. In the human body is the light of the True One. 167 All are equal in the eyes of the True Guru who is compassionate towards all. 168 The True Guru himself looks upon all with concern and consideration. He is par-upkāriā.

Nevertheless, there were detractors (nindak) of the Guru. 169 There were some who obliged the Sikhs to render services to them without any authority from the Guru. 170 The Sikhs of the Guru who believe that God is on his side are dear to God. 171 The Guru was prepared to forgive the detractors if they repented: they could still be redeemed. This was the greatness of the True Guru who was devoid of enmity (nirvair). 172 Opposition to Guru Ram Das appears to have come from rival claimants to the office of Guruship. But they could approach the administrators too for

support. Guru Ram Das refers to the earthly kings as subject to God's power who protects his devotees. The Guru and his Sikhs were under God's protection.¹⁷³ God is the sword and armour of the True Guru; they who think ill of him shall themselves be destroyed by God.¹⁷⁴

VI

The bāṇī of Guru Ram Das may now be seen in relation to the sarovar he excavated and the town he founded. Daily kīrtan of Gurbāṇī was performed in the midst of the amritsar in which the Sikhs bathe themselves. Apart from participating in the congregational worship they ate food in the langar that was maintained by their voluntary contribution in cash, kind, and service. This place for earning merit (dharmsāl) served as a model for other dharamsāls established by the representatives of the Guru. All human beings were welcome to join the congregational worship and to eat food in the langar.

The central dharamsāl in Ramdaspur was unique due to the presence of the personal Guru but the kīrtan of Gurbāṇī in other dharamsāl made them equally sacred. The equation of the Shabad with Gurbāṇī, and of Gurbāṇī with the Guru, becomes extremely significant in this context. The equation of God with the Guru, and of the Guru with Gurbāṇī, made the presence of God felt in the sangat.

The town of Ramdaspur has its own significance. In the first place, the realistic references to trade and artisanal occupations appear to be related to the presence of such people in Ramdaspur. Secondly, the earthly possessions of the Sikhs are sanctified. The temporal and spiritual concerns of the Sikhs are thus two sides of the same religious coin. The immanence and grace of God have their earthly expression in the dispensation of Guru Nanak and his successors, a dispensation that is the only hope of mankind in the Kaliyuga. Thus, in $b\bar{a}n\bar{t}$ of Guru Ram Das God enters history through the Guru, his $b\bar{a}n\bar{t}$, and his Sikhs for the redemption of the world as an expression of the divine will.

NOTES

- Shabdarth Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib Jī, 4 vols., Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, (standard pagination of Ādi Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib).
- 2. Ādi Granth, p. 65.
- Information on environment in the bani of Guru Ram Das comes 3. in bits and pieces. It has been sifted, collected and classified carefully. But there may be no point in giving a large number of references for information which is of no great significance in bits and pieces. Put together, it does show that Guru Ram Das kept his eyes and ears open to what was around him. All the relevant pages of the \bar{A} di Granth are given below: 82, 91, 40, 11, 89, 83, 85, 13, 41, 76, 78, 173, 174, 163, 164, 165, 166, 170, 167, 168, 169, 234, 235, 304, 308, 366, 306, 307, 301, 368, 367, 302, 303, 305, 309, 310, 312, 313, 314, 317, 449, 493, 494, 442, 452, 443, 447, 507, 538, 575, 576, 539, 528, 561, 573, 527, 550, 552, 554, 555, 586, 540, 551, 553, 574, 594, 669, 699, 604, 607, 646, 698, 606, 645, 696, 643, 651, 653, 670, 605, 642, 759, 732, 733, 720, 711, 719, 731, 735, 726, 733, 747, 773, 775, 776, 799, 800, 834, 835, 837, 844, 845, 852, 859, 860, 861, 862, 880, 882, 836, 849, 851, 853, 854, 982, 975, 976, 980, 983, 985, 998, 981, 984, 986, 996, 1038, 1071, 1116, 1178, 1114, 1115, 1179, 1191, 1135, 1201, 1248, 1250, 1294, 1245, 1200, 1246, 1263, 1296, 1265, 1295, 1313, 1318, 1319, 1320, 1337, 1317, 1323, 1324, 1325, 1326, 1336, 1421, 1423.
- For the text of So-Purakh, Ādi Granth, pp. 10-12. For English translation, Gurbachan Singh Talib, Sri Guru Granth Sahib in English Translation, 4 vols. Punjabi University, Patiala, pp. 28-30. This work, in various editions, has consecutive and standard pagination.
- 5. Ādi Granth, pp. 83, 129-30, 585. Talib, pp. 173, 262-64, 1236.
- 6. Ādi Granth, p. 556. Talib, p. 1176.
- 7. Ādi Granth, p. 174. Talib, pp. 357, 358.
- 8. Adi Granth, p. 606. Talib, p. 1277.
- 9. Adi Granth, p. 1242. Talib, p. 2502.
- 10. Adi Granth, p. 592. Talib, p. 1250.

- 11. Adi Granth, p. 443. Talib, p. 938.
- 12. Ādi Granth, pp. 10-12, 129-30. Talib, pp. 28-30. 262-64.
- 13. Ādi Granth, p. 86. Talib, p. 180.
- 14. Ādi Granth, p. 1241. Talib, pp. 2499, 2500.
- 15. Adi Granth, p. 1242. Talib, p. 2501.
- 16. Ādi Granth, p. 87. Talib. p. 183.
- 17. Ādi Granth, p. 87. Talib, p. 183.
- 18. Adi Granth, p. 443. Talib, p. 938.
- 19. Ādi Granth, pp. 10-12, 129-30. Talib, pp. 28-30, 262-64.
- 20. Ādi Granth, pp. 1239-40. Talib, p. 2496.
- 21. Adi Granth, p. 1240. Talib, p. 2497.
- 22. Ādi Granth, p. 1240. Talib, p. 2498.
- 23. Ādi Granth, pp. 10-12, 129-30. Talib, pp. 28-30, 262-64.
- 24. Ādi Granth, p. 1240. Talib, p. 2498.
- 25. Ādi Granth, p. 1241. Talib, pp. 2499, 2500.
- 26. Ādi Granth, p. 1242. Talib, p. 2501.
- 27. Ādi Granth, p. 1242. Talib, p. 2502.
- 28. Ādi Granth, p. 592. Talib, p. 1250.
- 29. Ādi Granth, pp. 593-1251.
- 30. Ādi Granth, pp. 593. 1252.
- 31. *Adi Granth*, p. 42. Talib, p. 91.
- 32. Ādi Granth, p. 367. Talib, p. 782.
- 33. Adi Granth; p. 367. Talib, p. 783.
- 34. Adi Granth, pp. 167-70. Talib, p. 350.
- 35. Adi Granth, pp. 173, 654.
- 36. Ādi Granth, pp. 448, 723.
- 37. Ādi Granth, p. 736.
- 38. Ādi Granth, p. 1245.
- 39. Ādi Granth, p. 1251.
- 40. Ādi Granth, p. 589.
- 41. Ādi Granth, p. 40.
- 42. Ādi Granth, p. 1422.
- 43. Ādi Granth, p. 561.
- 44. Ādi Granth, p. 39.
- 45. Adi Granth, p. 573.

- 46. Ādi Granth. p. 604.
- 47. Adi Granth. p. 572.
- 48. Ādi Granth. p. 562.
- 49. Ādi Granth, p. 605.
- 50. Adi Granth, p. 41.
- 51. Adi Granth, p. 1069.
- 52. Ādi Granth, p. 442.
- 53. Adi Granth, p. 1115.
- 54. Ādi Granth, p. 1246.
- 55. Ādi Granth, p. 540.
- 56. Ādi Granth, p. 676.
- 57. Ādi Granth, p. 731.
- 58. Ādi Granth, p. 167.
- 59. Ādi Granth, p. 169.
- 60. Ādi Granth, p. 168.
- 61. Adi Granth, p. 234.
- 62. Adi Granth, p. 235.
- 63. Ādi Granth, p. 313.
- 64. Adi Granth, p. 594.
- 65. Ādi Granth, p. 452.
- 66. Adi Granth, p. 539.
- 67. Ādi Granth, p. 732.
- 68. Adi Granth, p. 1424.
- 69. Ādi Granth, p. 1264.
- 70. Ādi Granth, p. 882.
- 71. Adi Granth, p. 733.
- 72. Ādi Granth, p. 307.
- 73. Ādi Granth, pp. 303, 306.
- 74. Ādi Granth, p. 853.
- 75. Ādi Granth, pp. 315-16.
- 76. Ādi Granth, 1116-17. Talib, pp. 2270-72
- 77. Ādi Granth, p. 1200.
- 78. Adi Granth, pp. 860, 775.
- 79. Adi Granth, p. 1246.
- 80. Adi Granth, p. 1114.

- 81. Ādi Granth, p. 1070.
- 82. Ādi Granth, p. 1239.
- 83. Adi Granth, p. 442.
- 84. Ādi Granth, p. 699.
- 85. Ādi Granth, p. 494.
- 86. Adi Granth, p. 507.
- 87. Adi Granth, p. 538.
- 88. Ādi Granth, p. 493.
- 89. Ādi Granth, p. 1335.
- 90. Ādi Granth, p. 1238.
- 91. Adi Granth, p. 997.
- 92. Ādi Granth, p. 833.
- 93. Ādi Granth, p. 82.
- 94. Ādi Granth, p. 366.
- 95. Ādi Granth, p. 759.
- 96. Adi Granth, p. 304.
- 97. Ādi Granth, p. 608.
- 98. Ādi Granth, p. 982.
- 99. Ādi Granth, p. 642.
- 100. Ādi Granth, p. 849.
- 101. Adi Granth, p. 1423. Talib, p. 2843.
- 102. Adi Granth, p. 1296.
- 103. Adi Granth, p. 651.
- 104. Ādi Granth, p. 95.
- 105. Ādi Granth, p. 96.
- 106. Adi Granth, p. 87.
- 107. Adi Granth, p. 175.
- 108. Adi Granth, p. 311.
- 109. Adi Granth, p. 492.
- 110. Adi Granth, p. 690.
- 111. Ādi Granth, p. 1244.
- 112. Adi Granth, p. 734.
- 113. Adi Granth, p. 1179.
- 114. Adi Granth, p. 368. Talib. pp. 784-85.
- 115. Ādi Granth, p. 368. Talib. pp. 785-86.

- 116. Adi Granth, p. 1316.
- 117. Ādi Granth, p. 94.
- 118. Adi Granth, pp. 305-06. Talib, p. 634.
- 119. Adi Granth, pp. 590-91.
- 120. Adi Granth, pp. 450-51.
- 121. Adi Granth, p. 451.
- 122. Ādi Granth, p. 593.
- 123. Ādi Granth, p. 444.
- 124. Adi Granth, p. 648.
- 125. Adi Granth, p. 172.
- 126. Ādi Granth, p. 649. Talib, p. 1361.
- 127. Adi Granth, p. 171.
- 128. Adi Granth, p. 666.
- 129. Adi Granth, p. 667.
- 130. Ādi Granth, p. 881.
- 131. Ādi Granth, p. 652.
- 132. Adi Granth, p. 669.
- 133. Adi Granth, p. 445.
- 134. Ādi Granth, p. 667.
- 135. Ādi Granth, p. 446.
- 136. Ādi Granth, p. 314.
- 137. Adi Granth, p. 986.
- 138. Ādi Granth, p. 995.
- 139. Ādi Granth, p. 697.
- 140. Ādi Granth, p. 977.
- 141. Ādi Granth, p. 1314.
- 142. Ādi Granth, p. 1202.
- 143. Ādi Granth, p. 300.
- 144. Adi Granth, p. 447.
- 145. Adi Granth, p. 1114.
- 146. Ādi Granth, p. 775.
- 147. Ādi Granth, pp. 528, 670, 1337.
- 148. Adi Granth, p. 1295.
- 149. Adi Granth, p. 1249.
- 150. Adi Granth, p. 801.

- 151. Adi Granth, p. 587.
- 152. Adi Granth, pp. 575-76.
- 153. Ādi Granth, pp. 78-79.
- 154. Ādi Granth, p. 773.
- 155. Ādi Granth, pp. 773-74.
- 156. Ādi Granth, p. 648. Talib, p. 1358.
- 157. Ādi Granth, p. 648. Talib, p. 1359.
- 158. Ādi Granth, p. 1263.
- 159. Ādi Granth, p. 1135.
- 160. Adi Granth, p. 726.
- 161. Ādi Granth, p. 725.
- 162. Ādi Granth, p. 326.
- 163. Ādi Granth, p. 1325.
- 164. Ādi Granth, p. 835.
- 165. Ādi Granth, p. 799.
- 166. Adi Granth, p. 976.
- 167. Adi Granth, p. 309.
- 168. Ādi Granth, p. 300.
- 169. Adi Granth, p. 850.
- 170. Ādi Granth, p. 317.
- 171. Adi Granth,, p. 978.
- 172. Adi Granth, pp. 854-55.
- 173. Adi Granth, p. 851.
- 174. Ādi Granth, p. 312.

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7

FORMATION OF SIKH IDENTITY

Qazi Nur Muhammad, who accompanied the army of Ahmad Shah Abdali during his incursion into the Punjab in 1764, recorded in his Jangnāma that the Singhs were not to be confused with the Hindus: they had a different religion.' Five years later, Kesar Singh asserted that Guru Gobind Singh had created the third panth as clearly distinct from Hindus and Muslims.² It was like a mote in their eyes. He was reiterating what was stated in the Rahitnama attributed to Chaupa Singh and in the Sākhī Rahit Patshahī: a Keshdhari Singh with his flowing beard was recognized among thousands of Hindus and Muslims.³ All this evidence may not appear to be startling because of the general impression that the Khalsa instituted by Guru Gobind Singh had a visibly distinct identity.

However, even the pre-Khalsa Sikhs were seen by their contemporaries as possessing a distinct identity. In the B40 Janamsākhī, God tells Guru Nanak that he was named Guru of the World' (jagat-gurū), the Guru of the Kaliyuga. He was commissioned to found a new panth. His followers would be called Nanak Panthis; they shall have a salutation peculiar to them, like the Vaishnavas, the Sanyāsīs, the Jogīs and the Musalmans; they shall have a sacred space of their own, called dharamsāl, like the temple of the Vaishnavas and the mosque of the Musalmans. Guru Nanak was to propagate the message of nām, dān and asnān. He and his followers were to remain unsullied as householders. They were to observe dharam, meditate on the Name, think well of others, and to redeem the people of the world. This prophecy can easily be seen as post-eventum. The Janamsākhī compiler looked upon the Sikh community as a distinct entity in the 1730s.4

Even in the seventeenth century, Guru Nanak was projected as commissioned by God to found a new panth. According to the Miharbān Janamsākhī, God (Pārbrahm) called Guru Nanak to his presence and sent him back to the world to start a panth for the redemption of mankind in the Kaliyuga. He was reassured that he had been redeemed and he would be the means of redeeming the world. The essence of the message of Guru Nanak was to be nām, dān and asnān. He was to spread the exclusive worship of Parbrahm in the Kaliyuga. People would be liberated by seeing him, by hearing him and by following him. For the compiler of the Janamsākhī, Guru Nanak occupied a unique position and none else was comparable to him in the Kaliyuga. His message too was unique. It transcended all earlier dispensations.

It is interesting to note that evidence on Sikh identity comes from an outsider too in the middle decades of the seventeenth century: the author of the *Dabistān-i-Mazāhib*. The traits of the Nanak-Panthis, also known as Sikhs of the Guru, noted by him distinguish them from all other people mentioned in his work. The Sikhs did not make any distinction between Guru Nanak and his successors, regarding them all as one. Indeed, if anyone of them did not regard Guru Arjan (the fifth *mahal*) exactly as Guru Nanak (the first *mahal*) he was treated as an unbeliever (*kafir*). Guru Hargoibind used the title Nanak for himself in his letters to the author of the *Dabistān*. That explains why every Sikh was regarded as the Sikh of Guru Nanak, and why the Panth was called the Nanak-Panth.

The Sikhs looked upon their Guru as the 'true king' (sachchā pātshāh) in contrast with the temporal king. The Guru's representative (gumāshta) was called Masand (from the Persian masnad) to indicate his importance. The Masands used to come to the Guru at the time of Baisakhi, bringing with them offerings collected from the Sikhs, and receiving a turban from the Guru as a parting gift. A large number of persons became Sikhs of the Guru through their mediacy. There was hardly any city in the world in which there were no Sikhs, and the Masand used to

collect offerings from all the cities and towns. To demonstrate that the Sikhs did not care for the distinctions of caste, the author of the Dabistān underlines that a Brahman could accept a Khatrī as his leader, and a Khatrī could accept a Jat as his leader, though the latter belonged to the lowest category of Vaishyas. In fact, many of the important Masands of the Guru were Jats, and the Brahmans and Khatrīs became Sikhs of the Guru through their mediacy. If a Sikh visited another in the name of the Guru, he was to be treated like the Guru himself. The collective prayer of the Sikhs was regarded as more efficacious than the prayer of a single person, even that of the Guru.

Like the principle of inequality, the Sikhs rejected the idea or renunciation (udās or tark-i duniā). That was why they took either to agriculture, trade or service (naukarī). Being productive, they could contribute towards the Guru's treasury. The author of the Dabistān observed that Guru Hargobind maintained 700 horses, 300 horsemen, and 60 matchlockmen on a permanent basis at Kiratpur. This was the result of a deliberate policy in which hunt, eating of meat, wearing of arms, and martial activities were encouraged. Being a teacher, Guru Hargobind could think of giving practical lesson to his opponents on the field of battle in effective use of the sword. The Sikhs did not observe any Brahmanical taboos about food and drink. There was nothing of the worship (ibādat) and austerities (riāzat) stipulated by the law books of the Hindus (shara'-i Hinduan) among the Sikhs. The Sikh belief in transmigration distinguished them from Muslims, and the Sikh insistence on the unity of God distinguished them from Hindus. The followers of Guru Nanak had nothing to do with idols in temples. An incident is related in the Dabistan to underline that the Sikhs had no respect for the goddess. A Sikh of Guru Hargobind broke the nose of an idol to show how helpless the goddess was and how foolish were they who believed in her power. The Sikhs never recited the Hindu scriptures (mantarhā-i Hunūd). Indeed, the banl of Guru Nanak was in the language of the peasants of the Punjab (zubān-i jattān - i Punjab); his followers had no concern

with Sanskrit which was regarded as the language of gods by the Hindus.

H

It is not generally known that Guru Nanak used the term sikh for his followers. The term was used by others like Kabir and Dadu in the sense of a disciple. Therefore, a disciple of Guru Nanak could be called Gursikh, the term used not only by the author of the Dabistān but also by Guru Nanak himself in the Japuji. 'Guru Nanak instructs the Sikh to come out of the snare of māyā by devoting himself to God and to live as a householder (and not as a renunciate). The Sikh of the Guru attains liberation and helps his associates to attain liberation. He serves the True Guru and reflects on the essence. By joining the sangat of the Guru, he crosses the ocean of existence. There is hardly any doubt that Guru Nanak admitted disciples and came to have a group of followers.

This has to be seen in relation to Guru Nanak's basic position. He did not identity himself with any of the existing system of religious beliefs and practices: neither the Brahmanical traditions, including Vaishnava bhakti, nor the ascetical traditions associated with Shaivism and Jainism, nor the Islamic tradition whether orthodox or Sufi. For assessing all these systems he had the same set of criteria which constituted his own system of thought. It was distinguished by his conception of liberation-in-life. One remained socially committed in the state of liberation, like a detached householder. Guru Nanak founded the institution of congregational worship and community meal, called dharamsāl. He used his own compositions for worship, and he chose a successor in his lifetime. Thus, he laid the foundation of a panth committed to three things: the leader, the scripture and the sacred space. This position was summed up in three Gs (the Guru, Granth and Gurdwara). Guru Nanak appreciated only one category of people, called sādhs, sants and bhagats. There is hardly any doubt that the Sikhs of the Guru were included in this category.10

Guru Angad contributed to these three institutions in his own way. The community kitchen became a regular feature of the dharamsāl where the Sikhs met for congregational worship. Gurbānī began to be collected and recorded in Gurmukhi script. Guru Angad followed the example of Guru Nanak and installed Amar Das as the Guru in his lifetime. The fact that Guru Angad used 'Nanak' for himself in his compositions was highly significant. The identification of the successor with the founder gave rise to the principle of the unity of Guruship. Even more significant was the explicit acknowledgement of Nanak as the Guru and his bānī as the vehicle of divine self-revelation (shabad).

The uniqueness of the path and the universality of Guru Nanak's message as different from that of the Vedas were emphasized by Guru Angad. There is only one amrit and no other. The $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{i}$ expressed the divine order to dispel the illusion of the law of karma leading to transmigration and hell or heaven and the differences of caste and gender. There is the same message for all. The consciousness of differences is quite clear.

In the bani of Guru Amar Das we come upon a new kind of awareness. What was implicit in the bani of Guru Nanak is made explicit. Guru Amar Das invites all kind of people to appropriate the path enunciated by Guru Nanak. Among them are the pandit and the Vaishnava, the jogī, the jangam and the sanyasi, and the shaikh (standing for a Muslim). The message of Guru Nanak and his successors is the only efficacious means of liberation in the Kaliyuga. Guru Amar Das's Anand is symbolic of this message: the worship of one God through the Guru's shabad in congregation (sangat) for liberation-in-life as the source of bliss. Not only the sādh, bairagi, sevak or sikh but also Gursikh and Gurmukh occur frequently in the bani of Guru Amar Das. The dharamsals are multiplying. The baoli is added to the central dharamsāl. Sikhs come for the Guru's darshan. Pothis are complied. The Rāmkalī Sadd suggests that Sikh rites of the passage are emerging. The world appears to consist of only two categories of people: the

Gurmukh and the manmukh, that is, the Sikhs of the Guru and the others around them.¹²

Guru Ram Das founded a new town and a new dharamsāl. As the dhādī of God, he was honoured with the robe of divine name; he invites people to turn to the Guru and meditate on the name enshrined in the Guru's shabad. To be indifferent to the name is to be oblivious of God and his hukam and nadar. Guru Nanak is the Jagat Guru and his House consists of four generations of Gurus. Guru Amar Das spread the message at places regarded as sacred and he constructed a baolī. 'Bānī is the Guru'. The sangat is the source of liberation. 'The Guru is the Sikh and the Sikh is the Guru'. The message of the Guru is the only efficacious message in the Kaliyuga. The liberated-in-life becomes a parupkari. Above all, the dispensation of Guru Nanak is an expression of divine grace for the redemption of mankind. Insistence on the uniqueness of the dispensation of Guru Nanak could hardly be more emphatic. 13

This insistence becomes clearer in the $b\bar{a}n\bar{\imath}$ of Guru Arjan. The Harmandar is completed. Ramdaspur becomes a flourishing town. Other towns are founded. The Granth is compiled. The Sikhs are increasing in numbers and many of them are affluent as traders and land holders. The human and material resources of the Guru and his followers are increasing. Guru Arjan talks of Rām Rāj in Ramdaspur. This Rām Rāj is divine rule. The entire dispensation of Guru Nanak and his successors has a divine sanction: it represents halemī rāj. All human beings are 'our brothers and friends' but 'we are neither Hindu nor Musalman'. This explicit statement on distinct identity comes as the culmination of a process that had started several decades earlier. 14

In this context, and with this background, we propose to analyze the *Vārs* of Bhai Gurdas in some detail from the viewpoint of awareness and articulation of Sikh identity.

as relevant for Sikh identity. Oberoi says in fact that there can hardly be a better source for understanding early Sikh identity'. 15 Bhai Gurdas enunciates in his Vārs some of the most enduring themes in Sikh consciousness: faith in the Gurus and their utterances, regular visit to dharamsāl, and importance of the sangat as a body of the faithful. Bhai Gurdas is not 'unaware of boundaries'. Muslims miss the correct path in his view and Hindus remain entangled in empty rituals and social inequalities. The Sikh way of life is 'a distinctive third path to human problem'. The Gurmukh, a follower of the Sikh Gurus and their doctrines, is the ideal man. To metaphysical differences are added a new idiom, a separate community of believers and a reworking of the social order. For Oberoi, all this does not go very far because there are 'no explicit statements on an independent Sikh identity' in the Vārs of Bhai Gurdas. 16

To McLeod the evidence of Bhai Gurdas suggests distinctive ideals for a conscious Nanak-Panthi identity based on common loyalty, association and practice. The custom of gathering (satsang) for regular kīrtan sessions, at which the compositions of the Gurus were sung, was an essential feature of the Nanak-Panthi identity. Caste had 'no place' amongst whose who were loyal to the Gurus. Furthermore, the evidence of Bhai Gurdas foreshadows the doctrine of Guru Granth/Guru-Panth to make the line of doctrinal development 'logical and clear, easily accommodating the final version within the established tradition of the Nanak-panth'. 17

The Vārs of Bhai Gurdas provide 'an extensive commentary' on the teachings of the Gurus. He mocks external observances 'gently yet effectively', and describes the way of life to be followed by the devout Sikh. McLeod looks upon the Vārs of Bhai Gurdas primarily as the vehicle of the teachings of the Gurus. After detailing the content of the first Vār he makes the explicit statement that the remaining thirty eight Vārs 'faithfully reflect the doctrines taught by the Gurus and enshrined in the sacred scripture'. There is repeated stress on a cluster of fundamental doctrines: the grace of the Guru, his crucial role, and the satsang. The sublime powers

of the Guru are contrasted with the futility of 'conventional religious practices'. Bhai Gurdas is vehement about 'the harm inflicted by the sectarian allegiances of Hindus and Muslims': they should recognize 'the perversity of their mutual antagonisms' and join 'the irenic way of the Guru'. Bhai Gurdas also repeats the Guru's teaching with regard to caste. All these statements are illustrated by quotations from the *Vārs*. ¹⁸ The evidence of Bhai Gurdas can be very useful to 'the historian of the Panth'. As an illustration McLeod quotes the stanza in which the differing policies and lifestyle of Guru Hargobind are contrasted with those of his predecessors. ¹⁹

McLeod is one of the very few historians who have talked about the whole range of the Vārs of Bhai Gurdas. But even he has not studied the Vārs thoroughly from the viewpoint of Sikh identity. With a high degree of convergence on some basic ideas, Bhai Gurdas provides a great deal of information on points consciously or unconsciously raised by McLeod and Oberoi. The questions relevant for Sikh identity may be explicitly stated: what has Bhai Gurdas to say about Guru Nanak and his five successors? What does he say about the institution of Guruship? What does he say about the institution of sādh-sangat in the dharamsāl? What is his conception of Sikhism? Who is the ideal Sikh for Bhai Gurdas? Where do the Sikhs stand in relation to 'others' around them? Answers to these questions can give us a clear idea of Bhai Gurdas's consciousness and conception of Sikh identity.

ΙV

For Bhai Gurdas, Guru Nanak is the World-Preceptor (jagat-gurū); he is the Manifest Guide (jāhar pīr). ²⁰ He was commissioned by God to redeem the world; darkness was dispelled on his appearance and the world became bright. ²¹ Regard him as the perfect Guru and everything he instituted as perfect: satnām-mantar, sabad, Gurmukh panth, sādh-sangat, and takht. ²² In the opening stanza of the first Vār, loving devotion (bhāv-bhagti), celebration of the Guru (gurpurb), nām-dān-isnān and liberation (mukt padārath)

are mentioned in addition to satnam-mantar and sat-sabad. The path he laid down as the true king was the highway for wheeled traffic $(g\bar{a}d\bar{t}-r\bar{a}h)$; it obliterated durmat and dual affiliation; it taught the Sikhs to live like lotus in the water, to remain detached in $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$, and to cherish humility.²³

The Guru lived as a house-holder (ghar-bārī) and he made householders his followers who remained detached (udās) in their attachment to worldly affairs (māyā). The highway of the perfect Guru taught how to live in accordance with Divine Order (hukam); the gur-sabad of Wāhiguru he proclaimed was beyond the Veda and the Book; it was meant for members of all the four castes (chār varan) who, as Sikhs, constituted the sādh-sangat. He established at Kartarpur a dharamsāl for the sādh-sangat as the True Abode. The true Guru was the true king, the king of kings; whatever he instituted was true: takht, farmān, nīsān, hukam, sabad, taksāl, bhagtī, kīrtan, gurmukh-panth, proclamation (dohī) and his rule (rāj). The same and the same a

Guru Nanak made the water run upstream by raising Angad as the Guru over himself. During his lifetime he placed the canopy of Guruship over Lehna's head; mingling light with light the true Guru changed his form. Guru Angad had the same tikkā, the same chhatar, the same takht, and the same muhar.28 Guru Angad was the master of the spiritual and temporal realms (dīn-dunī). His throne was everlasting. The coin struck in the true mint, the true sabad, was entrusted to him. He held sway over Siddhs, Naths, and Avtars.29 Guru Nanak, the pir of pirs and the guru of gurus, transformed a disciple into the Guru and the gurū became a disciple (chela). The Sikhs of the gurū were amazed to see a Sikh of the Guru becoming the Guru. 30 The Guru and the disciple became one.31 In the eyes of Bhai Gurdas, the gurchelā chelā-gurū syndrome had a distinctive bearing on the Sikh conception of Guruship. A great stress is laid on the interchangeable position of the $gur\bar{u}$ and the disciple. There is no difference between the Guru and his successor. They represent the same light.32 The perfect person shows the miracle of gur-chelā chelā gur.33 A diamond is set by the diamond. The same light is in two bodies.³⁴ The Gurmukh Sikh becomes the Guru and the Guru becomes a *chelā*.³⁵ Only among the Sikhs, a disciple becomes the Guru of the Guru.³⁶

When Guru Amar Das received the gift and the light from Guru Angad, the Guru became the disciple and the disciple became the Guru. As the second successor, Guru Amar Das became the 'grandson' of the Guru Nanak. He became the true Guru in place of Guru Angad: with the same tikkā, the same seat, and the same authority. He accepted disciples from all the four castes; their kula-dharam was replaced by the ideal of detachment (udās) amidst worldly concerns (māyā).³⁷

Guru Ram Das received Guruship from Guru Amar Das and followed the practice of $r\bar{a}jjog$, with the same light, and from the same throne. The great grandson of Guru Nanak was the pillar of the spiritual and the temporal realms $(d\bar{i}n-dun\bar{i})$; he was the untouched lotus of the house of Baba Nanak. As a householder he enjoyed the pleasures of life as the master $jog\bar{i}$, with optimism in hopelessness $(\bar{a}s\bar{a}\ vich\ nir\bar{a}s)$. He was the only master for all; Guru Amar Das was absorbed in him.³⁸

After Guru Ram Das, Guruship came to Guru Arjan, a son of Guru Ram Das. None else could bear the unbearable. Therefore Guruship remained in the house of Guru Ram Das. Guru Arjan belonged to the line of Guru Nanak as much as to the line of Guru Ram Das. He filled the treasure of *Gur-sabad* and remained absorbed in *kīrtan* and *kathā*. The *sādh-sangat* used to meet as *Gur-sabhā*. With his true standards, true court, true might, and true honour, the everlasting rule established by Guru Nanak became eminently visible under Guru Arjan. Innumerable Sikhs used to come from all the four directions to partake of the *langar* of *Gur-sabad* which was unknown to the *Veda* and the Book. His Sikhs remained detached amidst *māyā*. Even under torture he remained calm.³⁹

Guru Hargobind, who followed Guru Arjan, was Guru Arjan himself in a different body. He was a great and brave warrior who shattered the ranks of the enemy and made the welfare of others his own concern. He was no different from his predecessors. He walked firmly on the Gurmukh-marg which was sharp like the edge of a double-edged sword. His Sikhs followed him. 40 There is no difference between Gobind the Guru and Guru Hargobind: both refer to the same light. The principle of *chelā-gurū* applied to him as well; he was made the Guru by Guru Arjan; there was no difference between the father and the son or the son and the father. His critics maintained that Guru Hargobind did not stay at one *dharamsāl*; he was imprisoned in Gwalior by an emperor; he was afraid of none; kept dogs and went out for hunt; he did not compose, sing or listen to Gurbānī; and he gave preference to others over his old *sevaks*. The critics of Guru Hargobind were actually the rival claimants to Guruship. Bhai Gurdas defends his position as the true Guru, and the true Sikhs were attached to his feet. 41

Bhai Gurdas goes on to add that a crop needs a hedge and an orchard needs the hedge of hardy trees. The Sikhs should not be deceived by the appearance of a new role $(s\bar{a}ng)$.⁴² Guru Hargobind alone represents the 'sixth generation' of the Gurus.⁴³

V

The doctrine of the unity of Guruship, which accommodates apparent change in the policies of the Guru, is hammered by Bhai Gurdas. All the five successors are mentioned in the first *Vār* as an integral part of the account of Guru Nanak: a continuation and extension of his mission. The Guru and the Sikh become one when the Guru so desires. In this connection Bhai Gurdas mentions all the six Gurus together. All the six Gurus are invoked as one. Guru Nanak was made Guru by God himself. Guru Nanak exalted a Gurusikh as the Guru, and all the other successors were Gurusikhs to be exalted as Gurus. All the Gurusikhs who became Gurus represented the same light: a candle lighted by a candle, water mingling with water. The unity of the six Gurus is depicted in several stanzas. Guru Nanak was like God, and so was the Sixth-Guru, the only true Guru in his turn. Those who did not

acknowledge the Guruship of any of the five true successors of Guru Nanak were 'rebels'.49

The true merchandise is available only at the shop of the true Guru who is the perfect Merchant (sāhu).50 No sabad other than that of the Guru is true.51 The sabad of the Guru is in fact the Guru.52 Regard the sabad of the Guru as the Guru.53 Regard God as the Guru and the Guru as God.54 The true Guru is a tIrath superior to all the sixty-eight tIraths of the Indian tradition. Do not go to any other tirath.55 There is no liberation without the perfect Guru. 56 All one's love should be for the Guru; dual affiliation (dūja bhāo) is futile.57 Without the Guru there can be no liberation.58 Without submitting to the only true Guru one remains entangled. 59 Without the true Guru there is degradation at last. 60 The Guru obliterates durmat and duality. An outward change in the ways of the Guru is a testing time for the Sikh.61 Dear to the Guru are those who walk in humility, who work for the welfare of others.62 There is no true master other than the true Guru; none is so kind as the Guru, not even one's mother or father. 63 Bhai Gurdas makes it absolutely clear that the only way to liberation is the sole affiliation to the Guru who is equated also with God and Gurbāni.

Gurbāṇī occupies the central place in the Sikh scheme of things. One of the reasons why human birth out of the 84,00,000 births of the Indian tradition is the best is that one can understand Gurbāṇī and make others understand.⁶⁴ God is praised through the *sabad* as the perfect Guru is the foremost concern of the Sikhs.⁶⁵ The *sabad* of the Guru is both God and Guru.⁶⁶ The *sabad* of the Guru is not found in the Veda or the Book. God himself is present in the Guru's *sabad*, but not in the *Veda* and the Book.⁶⁷ The Sikh lives by the *sabad*, and Gurbāṇī is the nectar he drinks.⁶⁸ Significantly, Guru Amar Das is praised for opening the treasure of the *sabad*, and Guru Arjan is praised for filling the treasure of Gurbāṇī.⁶⁹ The *sabad* is the veritable form of the Guru.⁷⁰

The sabad and Gurbāṇī confer a peculiar distinction upon satsang and sādh-sangat. The feet that walk to satsang are sanctified. The place where sādh-sangat is held is bright like the

divine light; lacs upon lacs of *Vedas* and *Purāṇas* are nothing in comparison with the *kīrtan*.⁷² All the four castes meet in *satsang* and become Gurmukh.⁷³ Without the Guru's *sabad* and *sādh-sangat* even good persons find no liberation.⁷⁴ Truth is praised in the *sādh-sangat* alone.⁷⁵ The *sādh-sangat* is the abode of truth in which the True Guru abides; God is present in the *sādh-sangat*.⁷⁶ For the true Guru, the *sādh-sangat* is the only true association; it cannot be adequately praised.⁷⁷ There is no true *sangat* other than the *sādh-sangat*.⁷⁸ The Guru, the Gurbānī, and the Sangat are equated with one another, and with God.⁷⁹

The place where the sadh-sangat meets is dharamsal. It is the Mansarovar lake where the Sikh-swans enjoy kirtan of the Guru's sabad.80 It is the place where the Sikhs find jog within the home by performing service of Sikhs and listening to Gurbānī.81 The dharamsāl is the place where the Sikhs earn profit; all the four varnas become one varna and acquire the gotrā of Gurmukh; the grandfather and the grandson meet in the sādh-sangat as equals.82 The Gur-bhāīs look beautiful in the sādh-sangat.83 Very frequently, the sādh-sangat and dharamsāl are used by Bhai Gurdas as synonyms. In his view, the offerings that came to the dharamsāl were meant strictly for the Guru and his Sikhs and not for an individual. Personal greed for offerings was poison, a source of sorrow and faithfulness.84 There is no room for doubt that dharamsāl was by far the most important Sikh institution. The dharamsāl in which the Guru was present was literally the door of the Guru (Gurdwar). At other places, the Guru was deemed to be represented by gurbānī and the sangat.

Bhai Gurdas talks of Gursikhkhī for which he uses the terms Gurmukh-panth and Gurmukh-mārg too. Gurmukh-panth is distinct (nirol): it cannot be confused with any other. At one place Giani Hazara Singh equates the pure (nirmal) panth of Guru Nanak with the Sikh Panth. 85 More often, however, the panth is treated as path. Gursikhkhī is the instruction of the Guru. It is thinner than a hair, and sharper than the edge of the double-edged sword. 86 The Gurmukh listens only to the instruction of the Guru and

worships only One God; dubidhā is eradicated by the path he follows. 87 Significantly, the Gurmukh who regards the Guru's sabad and sādh-sangat as the menas of liberation discards all rites and ceremonies of kulā-dharma: the traditional rites of passage and the traditional observances known as āchār and vīchār. The Gurmukh-panth is based on Gurmat and it is clearly outside the systems of the Veda and the Book. 88

The highway of the Gurmukh is superior to all the twelve panths of the Jogis put together.89 No other path can be compared with the Gurmukh-mārg. 90 Bhai Gurdas is explicit on the uniqueness of Sikhkhi: there is nothing like it in the Indian religious tradition.91 The Gurmukh-panth transcends the twelve panths of the JogIs; the sabad which the Gurmukh sings is not there in the Veda or the Book. The salutation of the Gurmukh (I fall at your feet) makes the prince and the pauper equal, and makes no distinction between the young and the old; this salutation is different from that of the Muslim, the Jogi, the Sanyasi, and the Brahman. 92 Gursikhkhī can be seen through the grace of the Guru (gurduara) in the Gurmukh in the sādh-sangat.93 The life of Gursikhkhī is marked by the eradication of haumai so that one becomes dead-in-life; to do the bidding of the Guru is the deed of Gursikhkhī; instruction other than that of the Guru is like a moth before the sun.94 The Guru-Sikh relationship makes Gursikhkhī pre-eminent in the midst of Hindu and Muslim systems.95 Sikhism for Bhai Gurdas is emphatically a distinct system.

VI

The Gursikh is one who has received instruction from the Guru. 96 Another term used for the Sikh of the Guru is Gurmukh. His only panth is Gurmukh-panth; his only association is the sādh-sangat; he becomes casteless; his mere sight is better than the knowledge of all the six philosophies; he has no affiliation other than Gursikhkhī; he lives according to the sabad and cultivates humility; he is dear to the Guru on account of his loving devotion; he adores One God as the source of liberation in life; he appropriates Gur-

updes and becomes dust-of-the-feet (pā-khāk); he discards durmat, dubidhā, and falsehood; he appropriates gurmat, sabad, and truth; he serves the Sikhs of the Guru and regards them as mother, father, brother and friend.97 The devotional life of the Gurmukh covers recitation of and meditation on Gurbani, visit to the dharamsāl, and service of the Guru and his Sikhs.98 He performs manual services for the sādh-sangat; he writes Gurbānī to compile nothis; learns to play musical instruments for kIrtan; earns honestly and feels happy to give something to others; in all humility he regards other Sikhs as far above himself; he walks long distances to help them; he lives in accordance with the divine order (hukam) and remains detached in the midst of māyā.99 The social background of the Gurmukhs is diverse but there are no social distinctions in the sādh-sangat. 100 The Gurmukh regards himself as the lowest of the low; he becomes dust-of-the-feet and serves the sādh-sangat; he talks sweetly and walks in humility; he is happy to give something to others; he remains absorbed in the sabad; and he remains nirās in āsā. These traits distinguish the Gurmukh from all categories of people in the world. 101 Bhai Gurdas describes the situation in which people come to the Guru through the mediacy of Sikhs, become Sikhs, and turn into Gurmukhs. Their traits are described in detail. 102 The Gurmukhs regard the Guru and God as one, and know no other affiliation. 103 they are distinct from the rest of the world.104 The Sikh of the Guru and Gurmukh are synonymous for Bhai Gurdas: all the traits of the Gurmukh are associated with the Gursikh too. 105 They too are distinct from the rest of the peoples in the world. 106

Common affiliation to the Guru bound the Sikhs with one another in the local sādh-sangat, and the local communities with the Guru at the centre. One Sikh is an individual but two constitute sādh-sang, and in five Sikhs there is God. Bhai Gurdas feels gratified that there are thousands of Sikhs in every city and lacs in every country. 107 Pre-eminent among these countries was the Punjab where the greatness of the Guru was well recognized. But there were Sikhs in other provinces of the Mughal empire and in its

cities. Bhai Gurdas mentions Kabul and Kashmir, Thanesar, Delhi, Fatehpur, Agra, Lucknow, Paryag, Jaunpur, Patna, Raj Mahal, Dhaka, Gwalior, Ujjain, and Burhanpur. Many of the eminent Sikhs of the Gurus are identified as Khatrīs belonging to a number of gotrās: Sehgal, Ohri, Uppal, Julka, Passi, Bhalla, Sodhi, Beri, Kohli, Nanda, Sabharwal, Khullar, Vohra, Puri, Jhanji, Soni, Vij, Chaddha, Handa, Kapur, Behl, Sethi, Marwaha, Seth, and Ghai. There were some Brahmans, Aroras, Sūds and Jats too among the eminent Sikhs. Then there were lohārs, nafīs, chīmbās, machhīs, kumhārs, suniārs, and chandāls. Some Muslims are also mentioned among the eminent Sikhs of Guru Nanak and Guru Arjan. Some of the Masands of Guru Arjan are also named. 108 The Gurus addressed themselves to both Hindus and Muslims, and to all the four varnas. After joining the Sikh Panth they become one: they have no caste; they have the same colour, like the betel; they are like the metal made out of eight metals. 109 The idea of equality among the Sikhs is stressed by Bhai Gurdas throughout the Vars. Equally important for him is the idea that the only true relation in the world is that of a Sikh with another Sikh: the relationship of Gur-bhāīs is the true relationship. 110 The ties of faith are stronger than the ties of kinship in the eyes of Bhai Gurdas. It is obvious that he sings of both the Sikh Panth and the Sikh faith.

VII

The Sikh faith and those who cherish this faith are distinct from all other people known to Bhai Gurdas. This is one of his major preoccupations. In the first $V\bar{a}r$ itself, the Indian religious traditions known to Bhai Gurdas are mentioned, followed by various manifestations of the Islamic system. The Hindus and Muslims are explicitly contrasted to draw the conclusion that they have missed the truth. The metaphor of the blind leading the blind is used for both Hindus and Turks. The travels of Guru Nanak are seen as his universal triumph. The Wāhigurū mantar symbolized the transcendence of all faiths of the previous Ages. The theme of transcendence is taken up again in the eighth $V\bar{a}r$. Everything

related to 'Hindu' and Muslims is mentioned - all categories of people among them, their beliefs and practices, their occupations and identities. Apart from Muslims, the Jews and Christians are specifically mentioned. All are invited to become Gurmukhs who are different from them all. The Hindus and Muslims are different and distinct from each other but there is one thing common to both: they have missed 'the place'. They are not equal to the hair of a Sikh. This is true of Jews and Christians as well. Significantly, Bhai Gurdas makes no distinction between orthodox Muslims and Sūfīs: they all struggle in vain.

Vishnu, Brahma and Mahesh could not have the sight of God. The ten incarnations of Vishnu, as well as Brahma and Mahadev, have misled people.116 The ten incarnations of Vishnu remained in haumai; Mahadev did not know real jog; Indra and Brahma did not attain sahaj; and Narad, though a Munī, could not discard backbiting. Then there were many others who were nothing in comparison with the casteless Gurmukhs.117 It is interesting to note what Bhai Gurdas thought of the 'bhagats: Namdev, who brought a dead cow to life and Kabir, who came out of the prison, the Jat Dhanna and the butcher Sadna, the cobbler Ravidas, who became favous among all the four varnas, Beni, who was a selfless devotee, and the low caste barber Sen - they all attained liberation. The Sikhs of the Guru become dust-of-thefeet and show great forbearance: they have realized God but they do not reveal this secret. 118 It is remarkable that Bhai Gurdas thinks of the bhagats in connection with the Sikhs (and not the Gurus). In another stanza, several bhagats are mentioned to make the point that caste does not matter for liberation: jāt, ajāt and sanāt are all alike.119 The low caste Namdev was praised by the high caste Brahmans and Khatrīs; all the four varnas bowed to him. Indeed, the bhagat have no jāt or sanāt.120 The bhagats who had turned their consciousness towards God to eradicate haumai are the only category of persons equated with Gurmukhs.

More than one affiliation stands discarded as $d\bar{u}j\bar{a}$ $bh\bar{a}o$. Those who do not turn towards the Guru are bemukh. The most

them are the detractors (nindak), especially the detractors of the Gurus. ¹²³ The followers of Prithi Chand and his successors are denounced as mīṇās in this context. They claim to be Gurus but their claims are false; their followers believe themselves to be Sikhs but actually they are not. ¹²⁴ The minas stand outside the pale of Sikhism in the eyes of Bhai Gurdas in terms of doctrines, beliefs and practices. He draws clear boundaries between the Sikhs of the Gurus and the rest of mankind, except the bhagats. But even they are nowhere near the Gurus who hold a unique position in the world as the only agency of liberation.

The Vars of Bhai Gurdas leave a very strong impression that he is acutely conscious of Sikh religious identity. He believes in divine sanction behind the path instituted by Guru Nanak and followed by his successors. Central to the system is the doctrine of the True Name which symbolizes the Sikh conception of God. The equation between God and the Guru confers a peculiar importance on the latter. The Guru in turn is equated with Sabad and Gurbāṇī and by implication with the Granth compiled by Guru Arian. The Guru-Chela syndrome, unique in itself, gives a peculiar importance to the Sikhs and their congregation so much so that the Guru and the Sangat stand equated. The institutions of Guruship and dharamsāl become hallmarks of the distinctive Gurmukh-panth, both in the sense of a path and a community. The egalitarian character of the Sikh Panth distinguishes the Sikhs from all the other communities of the world. The Sikhs of the Guru are householders with a sense of social commitmeent. The bhagats are seen as forerunners not of the Gurus but of the Gurmukhs and only in so far as they gain liberation.

The criteria of Sikh identity for Bhai Gurdas are both subjective and objective: the doctrine of the Name, the Sikh scripture, the institutions of Guruship, dharamsāl, and the character of the Sikh Panth. What is said of the path is true of the panth: it is pure (nirmal) and distinct (nirol). The consciousness of Sikh identity is reflected in the denunciation of sectarian mentalities.

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Part IV RELIGION AND IDENTITY IN COLONIAL ENVIRONMENT

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8

CHRISTIAN PRESENCE AND CULTURAL RESPONSE

By 1961 there were more than three lacs of Christians in the Indian Punjab and more than four lacs in Pakistan. The first Christian missionary to the Punjab, John Lowrie, had come to Ludhiana in November 1834 to establish the first 'station' of the American Presbyterian Church. The 'land of the Sikhs' was considered to be in 'a favourable state to be influenced by the preaching of Christian Missionaries' because the Sikhs had already discarded the idolatry of Hinduism. Before long, John Lowrie was invited by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to start a school in Lahore for imparting English education to young princes and nobles. Lowrie could not go because of the state of his health. The American Presbyterian Church did not establish any station in the territories of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors, though it established stations at Sabathu, Ambala and Jalandhar before the annexation of the Punjab in 1849.

After the annexation, Amritsar was the first city to attract the attention of the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England which had started work at Shimla and Kotgarh in 1840. Amritsar was seen as the 'Chief Centre of Sikhism', the headquarters of 'the most interesting, most accessible, and least bigoted race in the Punjab, as well as the most vigorous and manly'. In 1862, John S. Woodside of the Presbyterian Mission at Ludhiana was invited by the Sikh Chief of Kapurthala to establish a mission house in his capital. Together with his family and his brother Bikrama Singh, the Chief attended the service. A few year

later, Prince Harnam Singh became a Christian and held high offices not only in the Church but also in British India. His daughter, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, too held high offices in India and in the World Health Organization of the United Nations.²

The attention of the Christian missionaries was not confinsed to the Sikhs of the Punjab. Even before the annexation of the Punjab, an appeal had been made by both army and civilian officers to the Church Missionaries Society for sending missionaries. A number of Missions established their stations in the Punjab in the second half of the nineteenth century. This process continued well into the twentieth century. The missionaries offered a variety of services in the name of Christ : village preaching and welfare work; churches, open to all; medical services in cities and villages; orphanages; schools at all levels, both academic and technical: colleges; hospitals and sanatoria; agricultural and industrial settlements; leper homes; preparation of dictionaries and grammars in the languages of the Punjab; Bible translation and preparation of religious literature; printing presses; adult literacy work and the literature required; Bible study through correspondence courses; audio-visual programmes and training; medical colleges; famine and flood relief work. Many of the major institutions established by the Christian missionaries in the Punjab are still functioning. 3

It has been argued recently that the spread of Christianity in India cannot be wholly conflated with colonialism (which itself is a rhetorical device rather than a precise concept). In the Punjab, however, the 'Christian heroes' like Sir Henry Lawrence, Lord John Lawrence, Sir Robert Montgomery, Sir Donald McLeod, Sir Herbert Edwardes, Arthur Roberts, Edwards Thornton, General Edward Lake and General Reynell Taylor are regarded as 'the founders of our Punjab Missions'. Lay Christians, that is, those who were not professional clergy, had a large part in the initiating and building of the Christian Church in the Punjab. However, the importance of the native Christians has been emphasized after due recognition given to the much useful support provided by

Europeans, especially in matters institutional and intellectual. The role of Imad ud-din, a Punjabi Muslim convert to Christianity, has been studied in some detail in the context of propagation and interpretation of Christianity by a 'native agency' for the natives. Very similar to his role among Muslims was the role of Sadhu Sundar Singh among the Sikhs.

It has been argued that though the development of Hindu religious consciousness was accentuated by the presence and activity of the Christian missionaries in India, Hindu religious consciousness had begun to emerge in the pre-colonial period. Nevertheless, the growing fear of conversion to Christianity obliged the defenders of 'Hinduism' to adopt methods of defence, like reconversion and re-shaping of Hinduism through excision and re-interpretation. The presence and activities of the Christian missionaries were not the only factor for 'raising the levels of Hindu religious awareness'. More research is needed on this issue for a proper assessment.⁸

There is hardly any doubt that the work of Christian missionaries in the Punjab was important, both in terms of its success and its containment. Their success was reflected in the emergence of a new religious community in the Punjab. Their presence obliged the Punjabis to look into their own cultural heritage and to respond to the changing environment in a manner that should enable them to retain and revitalize their heritage through new institutions and cultural formations. Their success in meeting the challenge of Christianity and colonialism retarded the success of Christian missionaries and their native agencies as collaborators of the colonial rule. We propose to have a look at the Christian missionaries and their work in the Punjab in this context.

11

A convenient starting point for our purpose is the report of the Punjab Missionary Conference held at Lahore in December 1862 and January 1863. Thirty-three clerical members attended this conference. They belonged to six missions: the Church of England.

the Church of Scotland, the American Presbyterian Church, the American Reformed Presbyterian Church, the American United Presbyterian Church, and the American Methodist Episcopal Church. The American Presbyterian mission was the earliest to be established in the Punjab, with its first station at Ludhiana in 1834. A few other stations were founded before the final occupation of the Punjab by the British in 1849. By 1870, the Presbyterian mission had its stations at Lahore, Jalandhar, Rawalpindi, Ambala and Subathu, with substations in the Ambala Cantonment, Rajpura, Jagraon, Shahabad and Hoshiarpur.¹⁰

The Church of England in the Punjab was represented not only by the Anglican chaplains for civil and military services but also by a number of societies, like the Church Missionary Society, the Society for the Propagation of Gospel in Foreign Parts, the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, and the society of St. Hilda. The Church Missionary Society had started its work at Simla in 1840, and at Amritsar in 1852, on invitation and offer of support from British administrators. A Bishop was appointed to Lahore in 1877. The United Presbyterian mission was established by the 1860s in Sialkot; the Reformed Presbyterian mission was established in Patiala. The Church of Scotland became active in 1856, and the Methodists reached Lahore in 1880. A Baptist mission was founded at Kharar. The Roman Catholics were late in appearing in the Punjab. In 1880, nevertheless, they founded the Vicariate Apostolic of the Punjab. On the whole, Christian missions came to cover nearly all the important cities of the Punjab, many of its towns, and some of its villages before the close of the nineteenth century.11

The number of lay members who participated in the Punjab Missionary Conference in 1862-63 was a little more than the number of clerical members. It was thirty-eight. Present among them were the Raja of Kapurthala and Sardar Bikrama Singh as well as the well known British administrators like Sir Herbert B. Edwardes, E.A. Prinsep, R.N. Cust, P.S. Melvill and A. Brandreth. Four out of the seven members of the 'provisional committee' of

the Conference were administrators; its President was Donald F. McLeod who was later to become Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab. He also agreed to become Chairman of the Bible and Tract Society for the Punjab launched at 'a private meeting' of the members of the Conference. Seven other administrators agreed to serve on this committee. Sir Robert Montgomery, the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, consented to be the patron of the Bible Society. 12

It was a considered view of many an administrator in the Punjab that Christian laymen should 'cooperate with missionaries in the various efforts to advance the cause of Christ among the heathens'.13 They could identify themselves, it was thought, with the missionary cause; they could undertake secular work on behalf of the missionaries; they could educate the native Christians and ensure their employment; and they could give financial support to poor houses, orphanages, dispensaries, and schools.14 There is hardly any doubt that the administrators helped the missionary work in various ways in their personal and official capacity.15 Some of the policies and measures of the colonial government as such were meant to support the cause of the missionaries and to promote their work.16 The close cooperation between the missionaries and the administrators was obtrusive enough to be seen by all; if there were any differences between them, they remained concealed from the Punjabis. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Punjabis looked upon both the missionaries and the administrators as representatives of the colonial state.17

III

The Christian missionaries and laymen shared alike the assumption that time was ripe for spreading the light of Christianity in India. The movements of 'God in His Providence' appeared to be far more surprising than even the scientific developments of the early nineteenth century, for the whole world was being prepared for the Gospel and the Christian Church was being fitted for God's work. It was a part of God's Providence that the empire should

be followed by the spread of Christianity, and that India should shine like the Koh-i Nur in the crown of her Christian Queen.¹⁹ India shall be redeemed; and over the prostrate forms of her superstition - fallen never to rise again - shall the sons and daughters of India yet sing their Saviour's praise.²⁰ As a lay Christian put it, India was the last country reached by Christianity in its ever advancing course and all Christians should awaken to the solemn responsibility of hastening the coming of the day 'when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea'.²¹ 'We have come to conquer India', said another, 'it is true; but let each one of us go home with the thought, that we have not come to conquer it for ourselves; our mission here is to conquer it for God'.²²

The primary purpose of Christian presence in the Punjab, as in the rest of the Indian subcontinent, was evangelical. As it was said by John Newton at the Punjab Missionary Conference in 1862-63, the 'immediate end contemplated, is the conversion and salvation of men'.23 Experience had shown, however, that their optimism notwithstanding the actual success of the Christian missionaries in converting Indians to Christianity was rather small, though not insignificant.24 It was necessary, therefore, to think seriously about how to work among the Punjabis. Newton suggested that the missionaries of Christ should preach 'with authority, as God's messengers'; co-workers of Christ, they should preach with 'a holy enthusiasm'. 25 Open preaching in bāzārs often led to controversy, because the Christian missionaries generally attacked the traditional beliefs and practices of the country rather in strong terms. In the Punjab Missionary Conference several members were of the view that instead of direct attack on heathenism, the missionaries should underline the superiority of their faith over Islam and idolatry: 'let the sun arise, and all the stars go out'.26 It was generally assumed that whereas other religions presented partial truth, Christianity represented the whole Truth.

However, in order to establish the superiority of Christianity it was necessary to acquire not only a good command over the

languages of the people who were the object of conversion but also a thorough knowledge of their religions. Their sacred writings, thus, became important for acquiring this kind of knowledge. From this to the specialized study of a particular religious tradition was only a step. This view was expressed in the Punjab Missionary Conference by William Keene of the Church Missionary Society who argued in favour of the missionaries taking up a particular line of study.27 Some of the Punjab missionaries took up the study of Islam, and some others of what they called 'Hinduism'.28 Sikhism was regarded as having a peculiar position. At least Keene thought that there was a greater chance of converting Sikhs to Christianity. His argument was interesting; he was hopeful paradoxically because of the superiority of Sikhism: 'just in proportion as the teaching of Nanak diverges from the gross errors of the popular Hindoo belief, and reverts to the simplicity of natural religion, so far must we look on it as favourable to the success of the labours of the Christian missionaries, among that interesting people, the Sikhs'.29 A few of the missionaries did pay some attention to the Sikh tradition, but so far as conversion of the Sikhs to Christianity was concerned, no significant success was awaiting them.30

Both directly and indirectly, western education was believed by the Christian missionaries to be the best means of evangelization. At the Punjab Missionary Conference, C.W. Forman of the American Presbyterian mission expressed the view that schools were doing 'a great preparatory work', but since education was absorbing much of the energy of the missionaries, 'yielding but little fruit in the way of actual coversions', it was necessary to go into the question of how schools could be made 'in the highest degree auxiliary to the work of evangelizing the country'. He was of the view that missionary schools should openly emphasize their interest in conversion.³¹ In any case, missionary effort in the field of western education in the Punjab during the late nineteenth century was perhaps even more considerable than that of the Government.³² The proceedings of the Punjab Missionary Conference clearly indicate that the system of grant-in-aid was

initially meant to help only the missionaries. Donald F. McLeod took credit for having made this suggestion to Lord Dalhousie because he felt that it was 'a grevious reproach to a Christian Government, that it should contribute nothing toward the Christian cause'; he could discover no other mode by which the government, 'while avowing the so-called principle of "neutrality", could, to some extent, without being inconsistent, lend its aid to those engaged in the teaching of the Scriptures'.³³

Unlike the British administrators, the missionaries were keen about female education for the same reason. 'If we wish to see Native society regenerated', asserted J.S. Woodside at the Punjab Missionary Conference, 'we must educate the females. You may educate the men as much as you please; but until their wives are also educated, no real improvement can take place'.34 The zenānā mission was established on this assumption. Orphanages for girls and girls schools were established for the same essential purpose. missionaries can be looked upon as the Indeed, the Christian pioneers of female education in the Punjab, as in the rest of the country.35 The evangelical purpose of medical missions, both for men and women, was also made clear in the Punjab Missionary Conference by Dr Gleghorn. According to him, the object of medical missions was to win the affections and confidence of the people in imitation of Jesus Christ, the Great Physician, 'who went about healing all manner of disease'. 36 The missionary concern for dispensaries and medical education comes out clearly from the proceedings of the Conference of 1862-63 and the later history of the missions in the Punjab. Above all, since an exclusive validity was claimed for the Bible, it was deemed necessary to bring the Bible to the notice of the non-Christians in their own languages. It was for this purpose that the Bible and Tract Society for the Punjab was launched in 1863.37

In collaboration with the British administrators, thus, Christian missionaries were able to undertake a wide range of activities within a quarter of a century of colonial rule in the Punjab. They established churches and chapels, gave instruction

in catechism, held Bible classes, preached in bāzārs and went out for 'itinerating' preaching in towns and villages, held religious debates with the representatives of indigenous religious traditions, sent women missionaries into Punjabi homes to influence women, founded orphanages for girls and poor houses for men, established dispensaries and took interest in medical education, trained women for teaching in schools, collected donations among other things for the poor native Christians, showed interest in finding employment for native Christians after their education, established schools for both boys and girls in which languages, including English, mathematics and geography, and, above all, the Bible were taught. What was perhaps the single most important item, they established printing presses to publish dictionaries, grammars, translations, tracts, pamplets, and some serious studies. In a single year the Presbyterian press at Ludhiana printed more than 225,000 copies and nearly 8,000,000 pages. The Pilgrim's Progress in translations was next in esteem only to the Bible. Some of the other significant themes were the original sin (entitled Kashf-i Jurm-i Ādam in Urdu and Prathm Pāp Kā Barnan in Hindi), the best way to salvation entitled Aftāb-i Nijāt, and the life of Paul.³⁸ To these may be added the fact of some conspicuous conversions till 1880, and mass conversions by 1890.39

IV

It has been observed recently that the 'Christian missionaries were seen as a part of government machine that first defeated the Punjabi, next sought to govern him, and then to convert him. This comprised a "hard" impact in contrast with the experience of Bengal during the period when Christianity and government could still be seen as somewhat separate'. To this observation may be added the difference of pace at which missionary work was undertaken in the Punjab, and the aggressive spirit in which it was sought to be implemented. Furthermore, there was not one, or two, but three religious communities in the Punjab to respond to the presence and the activity of the Christian

missionaries. It is in this context that we can appreciate the nature and the character of cultural reorientation in the Punjab.⁴¹

Only the most salient features of this cultural reorientation are mentioned here by way of illustration. In the first place, the Christian insistence on the Bible as the repository of truth brought the $Qur'\bar{a}n$, the Vedas, and the $\bar{A}di$ Granth into greater prominence as the sources of revealed truth. The Christian programme of conversion called forth a keen response in terms of shuddhī, tablīgh, and baptism of the double-edged sword (khande kī pahul), catering especially to the lower castes. The protagonists of reform movements entered the lists against Christian missionaries through public debate and even bāzār preaching. It was observed by The Tribune of 30 March 1889, for instance, that street preaching was very much in vogue: 'All along Anarkali, Hindu, Mohamedan, Christian, Arya and Brahmo preachers may be seen earnestly expatiating on the excellences of their respective creeds, surrounded by crowds of apparently attentive listeners'.42 The Punjabi reformers established their own printing presses to produce tracts and pamphlets as well as serious re-interpretations of their faith to counteract the actual or potential Christian influence. They undertook social reform in general, and established their own orphanages and relief work. They founded schools and colleges for boys and girls, in which religious education of their own was imparted along with western education through Anglo-Islamic, Anglo-Vedic or Anglo-Sikh institutions. In due course, their institutions collectively became much more important than those of the Christian missionaries. 43

Finally, since the Christian missionaries treated religious faith as by far the most important aspect human life, religious faith acquired renewed importance in the eys of the Punjabis as well. Since the missionaries thought in terms of religious communities, the Punjabis too came to evolve or accept constructs of monolithic religious communities. The spokesmen of these communities entered into keen competition not only with the Christian missionaries but also with one another. Much of the political

articulation in the twentieth century came to be based on unquestioned assumption of common communitarian interests. Competition was transformed into antagonism, and antagonism into hostility. 44 Even when individuals subscribed to national or secular programmes they did not discard the assumption of communal monoliths.

NOTES

- 1. C.H. Loehlin, 'The History of Christianity in the Punjab', The Singh Sabha and Other Movements in the Punjab 1850-1925, ed., Ganda Singh, Patiala; Punjabi University, 1997 (3rd edn.), pp. 185, 187, 190, 196, 203.
- 2. Ibid., pp. 189, 191, 192, 196.
- 3. Ibid., pp. 196, 197, 199, 202.
- 4. Robert Eric Frykenberg (ed.), Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross Cultural Communication Since 1500 (with special reference to caste, conversion, and colonialism) London: Routeledge Curzon, Introduction, pp. 6-10.
- 5. Loehlin, The History of Christianity in the Punjab', pp. 189-90,199.
- 6. Frykenberg (ed.), Christians and Missionaries in India, p. 61.
- 7. Arvil A. Powell, 'Pillars of New Faith: Christianity in Late-Nineteenth Century Punjab from the Perspective of a Convert from Islam', Christians and Missionaries in India, ed., Frykenberg, pp. 223-55.
- 8. Geoffrey A. Oddie, 'Constructing "Hiduism": The Impact of the Protestant Missionary Movement on Hindu Self-Understanding', Christians and Missionaries in India, pp. 161, 167, 174-82.
- 9. Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference held at Lahore in December and January 1862-63, Lodiana: MDCCCL xiii.
- 10. The Thirty-Sixth Report of the Lodiana Mission, For the Year Ending September 30, 1870, Lodiana: 1871.
- John C.B. Webster, The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India, Delhi: Macmillan, 1976, pp. 4-6, 14, 231-3.

- 12. Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference, p. 345.
- 13. This essay was presented by Lt. Colonel E.J. Lake.
- 14. Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference, pp. 96-100. In response to the essay by Lake, R.N. Cust suggested that lay Christians could support the missionary cause by donating money, giving advice and general support, writing in favour of the cause, and by presenting an example of a good believing Christian: ibid., p. 107.
- 15. John. C.B. Webster, *The Christian Community*, pp. 16, 43-4, 45, 75, 168.
- 16. For legislation to help the work of evangelism, ibid., pp. 137, 139, 250.
- 17. According to John Webster, relations between missionaries and British officials were closest in the Punjab during the years following annexation, and even when relations became more formal and distant the Presbyterian missionaries continued to enjoy considerable access to British officials; this situation led to a 'close identification between them and the Government in Indian eyes': The Christian Community, pp. 43-4. For the Punjab Government's partial withdrawal from the field of education in favour of the missionaries, ibid., pp. 168-9.
- 18. Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference, p. 339.
- 19. Ibid., pp. 341-2.
- 20. Ibid., p. 340.
- 21. Ibid., pp. iv-v.
- 22. Ibid., p. 344.
- 23. Ibid., p. 3. 'The central task, indeed the very raison d'etre, of the Presbyterians in India was that of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and preaching it effectively. The rest of their work was supposed to be either a means of creating opportunities to preach or else an implicit demonstration of what they were saying explicitly in their preaching': Webster, The Christian Community, p. 93.
- 24. Till 1872, the total number of Punjabis converted to Christianity by the Punjab Mission was less than 300: Webster, The Christian

Community, p. 47. Converts gained by other missions in the Punjab would not add much to the absolute number.

- 25. Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference, pp. 7-10.
- 26. Ibid., pp. 14-17, 23-4.
- 27. Ibid., pp. 261-8. Already in 1840, the well known Orientalist Horace Hayman Wilson had emphasized the necessity of studying Hindu religions 'in order to prove their erroneousness and to persuade the Hindu intelligentsia to adopt the Christian faith'. He made a detailed study of the Purāṇas and translated the Vishnu Purāṇa into English. Hopkins advised the missionaries to leave the native scholar alone if they did not develop great logical ability and deep learning to be able to refute the doctrines of Hinduism: Suvira Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaishnavism, Delhi: 1967, pp. 1-2.
- 28. For information on a few of the most important scholar missionaries of the nineteenth century Punjab, Webster, *The Christian Community*, pp. 30, 41, 96-105.
- 29. Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference, p. 262. Emphasis on monotheism and rejection of idolatry, caste distinctions and the custom of satī were regarded as the strong points of Sikhism. The Sikh support to the British in 1857-58 was looked upon as a possible sign of their redemption in the near future: ibid., p. 337. One of the reasons for establishing the first Presbyterian mission at Ludhiana in 1834 was the presence of the Sikhs in the area who were looked upon as 'in a good degree teachable': Webster, The Christian Community, p. 13.
- 30. So far as the Punjab Mission was concerned, only 22 Sikhs had accepted Christianity, and they formed less than 10% of the total number of converts: Webster, The Christian Community, p. 49. This percentage was rather close to the percentage of the Sikhs in the total population of the Punjab. Among the converts were the former Maharaja Dalip Singh and Prince Harnam Singh of Kapurthala. Moreover, Sikhs were converted to Christianity by other missions also, and their proportion among the converts was perhaps a little more than their percentage in the total

- population. But this situation was to change radically in the twentieth century when the absolute number of Sikhs and their percentage in the total population increased appreciably.
- 31. Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference, p. 31.
- 32. For missionary activity and their relative success in the field of education, Webster, *The Christian Community*, pp. 150-79; 17, 197, 229, 269-70.
- 33. Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference, p. 49.
- Ibid., p. 117. Woodside also favoured the founding of orphanages for girls and schools for orphan girls: ibid., p. 120.
- 35. For missionary work for women in the Punjab by the Punjab Mission, Webster, *The Christian Community*, pp. 142-4, 272.
- 36. Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference, p. 108. Newton expressed the view that a certain proportion of native Christians should be educated for the medical profession: ibid., p. 113.
- 37. Ibid., pp. 339-45. In order to underline the positive prospect before the Bible Society, it was mentioned that nearly 70,000,000 copies of the Bible had been published in nearly 200 languages since 1800. 'In other words, within the past half century there have been probably more copies of the Scriptures given to the world, than had been put into circulation in all the preceding 1,800 years'.
- 38. The Thirty-Sixth Report of the Lodiana Mission, Lodiana: 1871. 39. Webster, The Christian Community, pp. 18-19, 47-53, 125, 247. Once the Christian missionaries decided to concentrate on the lower castes for conversion, the number of converts shot up rapidly. The total number of Christians in the Punjab in 1881 was less than 13,500; ten years later it was more than 23,000; in 1901 it rose to about 69,000; ten years later it was nearly 136,500; and by 1921, it was more than 168,500. For Presbyterian activity in general, ibid., pp. 106-9, 132-3.
- 40. Kenneth W. Jones, Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India (The New Cambridge History of India, III,1), Hyderabad, 1989 (Indian edition by Orient Longman), p. 87.

- John Webster also observes that "competition was more intense in North India and especially in the Punjab than elsewhere in India: The Christian Community, p. 268. However, both Jones and Webster are talking in terms of the difference of degree and not of kind.
- 42. Quoted by Kenneth W. Jones, Socio-Religious Reform Movements in North India, p. 1.
- 43. For the Punjabi response to Christian activity, see also Kenneth W. Jones, Arya Dharm, Delhi: 1976; Spenser Lavan, The Ahmadiyah Movement, Delhi: 1974; N.Gerald Barrier, The Sikhs and Their Literature, Delhi: 1970; J.S. Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab (The New Cambridge History of India, 11.3), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- 44. John Webster has observed that 'religious belief was considered to be fundamental variable in the process of individual and social change; all others flowed from that': The Christian Community, pp. 133-4. Furthermore, 'communal loyalties of a religious nature were created and intensified': ibid, p. 258. However, John Webster does not refer to communal loyalties becoming the basis for political articulation.

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9

THE SINGH SABHAS

An association called 'Sri Guru Singh Sabha' was founded at Amritsar in 1873. The immediate cause of its foundation was the announcement of the conversion of a few Sikh students of the local mission school to Christianity. Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, on whose initiative the Singh Sabha was founded, became its first president. Its first secretary was Giani Gian Singh of Amritsar (different from the celebrated author of the Panth Prakāsh and the Tawārīkh Gurū Khālsā). Nothing much is known about the early activities of the Singh Sabha. In 1877, it petitioned the authorities of the Oriental College at Lahore to introduce the teaching of Punjabi language and literature, reflectiong Sikh concern for both. The first publication of the Sabha is said to be an eighty page booklet entitled Srī Gurpurab Parkāsh, that was meant to be helpful in celebrating the birth anniversaries of the Gurus. The Sabha was evidently interested in matters related to the Sikh faith. The most eminent individuals associated with the Sabha were Raja Bikram Singh of Faridkot, Kanwar Bikrama Singh of Kapurthala, and Baba Khem Singh Bedi. They represented the elite among the Sikhs. The use of the term 'Singh' and not simply Sikh, for the association was highly significant. It referred to the identity of the Sikhs for whom the Sabha was to work. Significantly, when Baba Khem Singh Bedi proposed in 1883 that Singh Sabhas should be called Sikh Singh Sabhas, he had to drop the proposal because of a strong opposition.

The British historian J.D. Cunningham had observed after the Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-46:

The Sikhs do not form a numerous sect, yet their strength is not to be estimated by tens of thousands, but by the unity and energy of religious fervour and warlike temperament. They will dare much; and they will endure much, for the mystic Khalsa or commonwealth.

Cunningham had lived among the Sikhs for eight years and come into contact with all classes of men from 1837 to 1845.1 He was also more familiar with Sikh literature than all his European predecessors and contemporaries.2 He was familiar with 'the Granth of the Tenth Master', called the Dasam Granth. In his view, it was only partly composed by Guru Gobind Singh. It was treated as a scripture, but Guruship was believed to have been vested only in the \bar{A} di Granth. Furthermore, the Sikhs did not regard even the most revered of their holy men as Gurus, because Guruship had been declared by Guru Gobind Singh 'to rest in the general body of the Khalsa'. Next in importance to the two Granths were the Vars of Bhai Gurdas and the Rahitnamas of Bhai Nand Lal and Bhai Prahlad Singh. The former depicted Sikhism as a new dispensation and the Sikh Panth as a distinct entity; the latter underlined Sikh belief in the sovereignty of the Khalsa (rāj karegā Khālsā) and the vesting of Guruship in the \bar{A} di Granth as well as the Khalsa. Not only in the literature held in high esteem by the Sikhs, but also on the ground, the Khalsa were visible everywhere. Cunningham had no doubt that the Sahajdhari Sikhs (the khulāsā Sikhs of his predecessors) were almost unknown in the Punjab. They were seen in the cities of British India, but in the Punjab, the warlike Singhs of the tenth king were predominant. ³Cunningham was emphatic, that 'the great development of the tenets of Guru Gobind Singh has thrown other denominations into the shade'.4

The 'impress' of Guru Gobind Singh could be seen in the 'elevated and altered' constitution of the minds of the Singhs, as much as in the 'amplitude' of their physical frames. A living spirit possessed 'the whole Sikh people'. They were 'wholly different from other Indians' in their religious faith and worldly aspirations, and they were bound together by a 'community of inward

sentiment, and outward object unknown elsewhere'. Their enthusiasm as converts to 'a new religion' was still fresh; their faith was 'still an active and living principle'. They continued 'to make converts'. With a firm faith in God, they felt convinced that 'sooner or later He will confound their enemies for His own glory'.

The Singhs figure prominently among the top most jāgīrdārs of the kingdom of Lahore. A dozen of them received revenues worth Rs. 1,000,000. On the whole, the Singhs got more than sixty per cent of the total revenue alienated by the state in favour of large jāgīrdārs. Of the remaining Rs. 5,000,000 given out in smaller jāgīrs, the Singhs had a lion's share. The Sikhs also received a very large share of the 'religious grants'. Foremost among them were Sodhis, who got Rs. 500,000 a year. They were followed by Bedis, who received Rs. 400,000. Together, the Sodhis and Bedis received forty-five per cent of the total revenue alienated by the state as dharmarth. The Golden Temple and many other gurdwaras and a fair share of the remaining Rs. 1,100,000. The Akalis, too, are mentioned as recipients of religious grants along with others. Cunningham leaves no doubt that the Singhs were active participants in the affairs of the kingdom of Lahore and formed the most important category of beneficiaries of its patronage. He does not give much detail, but a detailed study confirms his general impression.6

Of nearly two scores of Generals and Commanders in the army of Lahore before the first Anglo-Sikh war, a little more than half were Sikhs. More significantly, all the Sikhs who joined the army were Khalsa Singhs. There was hardly any unit of cavalry, infantry or artillery that did not have Singh soldiers. Cunningham appreciated the 'manly deportment' of the Singh soldiers even after their defeat, which added 'luster to that valour which the victors had felt and generously extolled'. Cunningham refers to the Panchayats of Singhs from each battalion or company. Through them, Sikh people could intervene in the nomination, and in the removal, of their rulers on behalf of the Khalsa.

Cunningham equated the Sikh virtually with the Singh. A

careful reading of his *History* leaves little doubt that in estimating the number of 'Sikhs' he was actually counting the Singhs. His argument is something like this. The strength of the Sikh armies had been estimated to be 70,000 at the lowest and 250,000 at the highest. In his estimate, the Sikhs could muster about 125,000 'soldiers of their own faith'. Their families accounted for 625,000 to 750,000 Sikhs. However, not all Sikh families were represented in the army. Even those families that were represented, did not permit all the brothers to join it. He suggested, therefore, that the gross population of the Sikhs should range between 1,250,000 and 1,500,000. They were spread all over the central parts of the Punjab, with numerical dominance only in a small pocket in the protected Sikh states.⁸

There was a good deal of emphasis in Sikh literature on social equality. A good foundation was thus laid for 'the practical obliteration of all differences'. The erstwhile outcaste Chūhṛās and Chamārs formed a part of the Khalsa Panth. Sometimes women, too, were initiated through the baptism of a single-edged dagger. All Sikhs partook of the sacred parshād in common. However, there was no injunction to change the traditional patterns of matrimony and commensality. Despite political and social differentiation, there was religious equality among the Khalsa in the 1840s.9

The subversion of Khalsa Raj in 1849 created a radically new situation. The loss of political power had immediate economic and social implications for the Khalsa and brought in its trail the problem of re-adjustment. The long-term policies of the new rulers created a new social and political environment and affected the Khalsa. New challenges had to be faced. The Khalsa tried to meet them in the light of their understanding of the past, and their vision of the future. In order to be effective, they had to create new institutions.

with the rest of India and the rest of the world. This contact was facilitated by the new means of transportation and communication. Metalled roads, railways, post and telegraph and the press made the province a more compact unit. Not only could goods be imported or exported with greater ease, but new men and new ideas could also enter the Punjab. The ideas and programmes of the Brahmo Samaj, for instance, entered the Punjab in the wake of the Bengali Babus in the new administration of the province. At a later stage, the ideas and programmes of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan came to influence the Punjabi Muslims. The Arya Samaj of Swami Dayanand found an equally congenial soil in the Punjab. Such developments could provide both a challenge and a point of reference for emulation by the Khalsa.

The colonial rulers were deeply interested in agrarian production. Revenue from land was still the major source of income. Periodic settlements of revenue in cash began to be made, involving the recording of rights in land. Irrigation through canals was even more efficacious for increasing agricultural production. A network of canals changed the physical appearance of the province from the Jamuna to the Jhelum. External markets accelerated the process of commercialization and further increased agrarian production. This increase was reflected in the increased volume and value of trade. The development of the colonial economy spelt prosperity for the trading communities and large landholders, but it meant poverty and depression for the small peasants. This resulted in an increased number of tenants, and the transfer of land to moneylenders. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Punjab Alienation of Land Act was passed to obviate transfer of land from agriculturists to non-agriculturists. The major beneficiaries of this Act were the large landholders. The economic policies and measures of the colonial rulers, thus, had important implications for social change and affected the fortunes of various segments of the Punjabi society in different ways.

This was equally true of the new administration. Not only were the departments multiplied, with a lot of importance attached

to revenue, police and justice, but also a large measure of bureaucratic rule was established in place of the jāgīrdārī system. A new kind of personnel was needed at the lower rungs of this administration. Import of personnel from Bengal and the United provinces could serve this purpose in the beginning, but not for all times. Sooner than later, Punjabis had to be inducted, thereby introducing a sure degree of competition amongst them. A new system of education was needed to produce suitable personnel. Urdu was introduced as the medium of education up to matriculation. English was introduced for higher education. The content of this new education was western sciences, social studies and English literature. The educated Punjabis could and did cater to the needs of administration. New professions were thrown open by the new administration and the new system of education itself: law, medicine, engineering and teaching. New education also meant new ideas that could be disseminated through the print media. Journalism emerged as a new profession. The various segments of the Punjab society were affected differently by new opportunities in services and professions.10

The census reports published by the administration, and the social categories used for classification, made the Punjabi people increasingly conscious of numbers and identities of various kinds. Classification in terms of religious communities proved to be important in various ways. Christian missionaries had begun to enter the Punjab with the advent of British rule. A large number of missions were established in the nineteenth century. They opened schools and, eventually, colleges. They also opened hospitals and established orphanages. But their primary objective was conversion. Optimistic about their success, they denounced all indigenous religious beliefs and practices as morally degrading. They condemned what they regarded as social evils arising out of discrimination on the basis of caste and gender. They were not unsuccessful in their evangelical objectives. Gradually at first, and then rapidly with the passage of time, they gained converts, especially from amongst the lower castes and outcastes. The

number of Christians in the Punjab increased from 4,000 in 1881 to about 300,000 in 1921.11

The activities of Christian missionaries obliged the leaders of the Punjabi society to set their own religious house in order. Re-evaluation of religious traditions, systematic formulation of religious beliefs and practices, propagation of ideas through the printing press, and adoption of an educational system geared to socio-religious objectives, became the common concerns of the Punjabis. Languages and scripts acquired a new kind of importance and pivotal importance was given to religious scriptures. The Anglo-Vedic, Anglo-Islamic and Anglo-Sikh systems of education were the indigenous response to Christian schools and colleges, as well as to the government institutions in which no religious instruction was provided.

With the introduction of bureaucratic administration, the decline of the former ruling class of the kingdom of Lahore was inevitable. Its members had earlier enjoying jāgīrs for rendering services to the state. Their services were now not needed any more. Therefore, their jāgīrs had to be taken back. The jāgīrdārs who had resisted the British were generally given pensions for life. The others mostly retained a small part of their jagirs in perpetuity. The Khalsa jāgīrdārs suffered more than the others because of their larger number and greater opposition to the British. However, nearly all of them supported the British actively during the uprising of 1857-8, and received generous rewards. The Sikh aristocracy, as a class, was rehabilitated in the eyes of the British administrators, and came to be treated as 'the natural leaders' of the Sikh people. At least half of the aristocratic families of the 1840s survived into the twentieth century by adjusting themselves to the new situation and by making use of the new opportunities. Some new families also became 'families of note'. As a class, the Sikh aristocracy was next in importance to the ruling chiefs of the protected Sikh states like Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot and Kapurthala.

The religious grants given by the Sikh rulers were not entirely taken back by the British, even though they did not patronize religious institutions as a matter of policy. About three scores of Gurdwaras continued to hold lands. A number of Sodhis and Bedis retained a part of their grants. The descendents of eminent Bhāīs and Giānīs of the kingdom of Lahore, too, retained a part of their grants like the families of Bhai Ram Singh, Bhai Gobind Ram and Bhai Gurmukh Singh. Some of the former grantees joined hands with the former jagirdars to help the British administration to control and manage the affairs of the Golden Temple. Regarding Amritsar as the possible source of Sikh resurgence, the Punjab administrators were anxious to keep the Golden Temple under close supervision. A 'simple magisterial and political control' was established over it by the administrative manual (dastūr al-'aml) of 1859, never to be relinquished till the Golden Temple was taken over by the 'high spirited' Khalsa in 1920.

The worst sufferers of the change from the Khalsa to the British Raj were the Singh soldiers. Many of them were retrenched after the Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-6. All of them were disbanded after the Anglo-Sikh war of 1848-9. The uprising of 1857-8, however, obliged the Punjab administrators to recruit some Sikhs all afresh. Their performance proved to be amply satisfactory in serving the empire. The Sikhs, henceforth, began to be recruited in large numbers. During World War I, their absolute number in the Indian army was much smaller than that of the Punjabi Muslims, but their proportion in the Indian army in proportion to their total population was larger than that of any other religious community. There was a common assumption among the British that the Khalsa were distinguished from other Sikhs because of their martial spirit. Indeed, the Sikhs whom the British met in the battles of 1845-6 and 1848-9 were all Khalsa Singhs. Their martial prowess appeared to spring from their faith. The British army authorities insisted, from the very beginning, that all Sikhs joining the army should observe the Khalsa form. As in the army of Lahore

earlier, so in the British Indian army now, all Sikh soldiers and officers were Khalsa Singhs.

The bulk of the Sikhs lived in the countryside as peasants, artisans and agricultural labourers. They were all affected by the agrarian policies of the British. The small Sikh landholders were prone to indebtedness, though perhaps less than their Muslim and Hindu counterparts. Many of them were reduced to the status of tenants. But the large landholders generally began to produce for the market. This was more true of the canal colonies, where Sikhs had got a large proportion of the land on account of their being good cultivators or good soldiers. Some members of the Sikh aristocracy also received large chunks of land as a reward for services rendered to the colonial rulers. The large landholders in general, and the Sikhs in particular, were the major beneficiaries of colonial rule in the countryside. In cities and towns, the Sikhs were mostly Khatrīs and Arorās. As part of the traditional trading communities, they were among the primary beneficiaries of colonial rule, but the number and proportion of the Sikhs amongst the Khatrīs and Arorās of the Punjab was rather small.

The percentage of agriculturists, artisans and traders and shopkeepers in the Sikh community did not change in any significant way. The agriculturists amounted to over 73% in 1921. The Jats alone accounted for more than 60 per cent of the Sikhs. The Khatrīs and Arorās were about 7 per cent, a percentage much smaller than that of the Chūhrās and Chamārs. The Tarkhāns, Nāīs, Jhīwars and other groups of the *jajmānī* system represented nearly 12 per cent of the Sikhs.

However, all the Sikhs were not pursuing their traditional occupations. Many Khatrī, Arora& and Brahman Sikhs were in civil administration, and in the professions of law, medicine, engineering, teaching and journalism. Many Jat Sikhs were in the army and the police. This does not mean, however, that no agriculturist Sikhs were in civil administration, or in other professions. Nor does it mean that there were no Khatrīs or Arorās in the army or the police. In fact, there were some Tarkhāns,

Kalāls and Chūhrās too in the army, and there were some Labānās, Nāīs, Jhīwars and Chhīmbās in the police. All the traditional segments of the Sikhs were represented in the professions too. However, the largest representation in the professions and in the civil services was that of the Khatrīs and Arorās. They were also the most educated amongst the Sikhs. But only about 10 per cent of the Sikhs were literate in the early decades of the twentieth century. Contrary to the general impression, the Sikhs were not given any preference over others for civil employment. They held less than per cent of the positions in various departments of the government. Even in the police, they held less than per cent of the positions. We may add that in 1921 there were Jat and Tarkhan Sikhs owning about a hundred factories. On the whole, a small but influential middling class was emerging among the Sikhs, to cooperate or 'compete' with 'the natural leaders' within the Sikh community, and to compete also with 'Hindus' and Muslims'. 12

The demographic development of the period presents three striking features: the total number of Sikhs rose from about 2,000,000 in 1881 to more than 4,000,000 in 1931; the percentage of Singhs in the Sikh community rose to about 90; the Sikhs formed less than 14 per cent of the total population of the province. The early British administrators carried the impression that the number of the Khalsa was decreasing after the loss of political power. 13 This is not borne out by the census returns of 1881, 1891 and 1901, when only the Singhs were taken into account for enumerating the Sikhs. In 1911, for the first time, the census officials returned all those persons as Sikhs who claimed to be Sikhs, and there was the phenomenal increase of more than 37 per cent over the total of 1901, Even so, the percentage of non-Khalsa Sikhs was far smaller than that of the Singhs. Apart from the natural rate of increase, the increase in the percentage of Singhs was due to the increasing consciousness of Singh identity among the Sikhs and the conversion of non-Sikhs. The demographic change among the Sikhs underlined the importance of religious movements among them during the period of British rule, most notably the Singh Sabhas.

H

The second Singh Sabha was established at Lahore in 1879, on the initiative of Professor Gurmukh Singh and Bhai Harsa Singh, both teachers at the Oriental College. It was avowedly meant for propagating-education and religion amongst the Sikhs. Its president, Diwan Buta Singh, was a publisher and its secretary was Professor Gurmukh Singh himself. Sardar Attar Singh, the former chief of Bhadaur, began to patronize the Sabha. After the mid-1880s, Jawahar Singh Kapur and Giani Ditt Singh abandoned the Arya Samaj to join the Singh Sabha. A number of periodicalsdaily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly-were started by Professor Gurmukh Singh in the 1880s. Amongst these was the best known, and the most influential, Khālsā Akhbār which was edited by Giani Ditt Singh for a number of years till 1901. In 1886-87, the Lahore Singh Sabha demonstrated their loyalty to the British by telling the Sikhs to remain aloof from Maharaja Dalip Singh and his selfstyled well-wishers. In 1892, Professor Gurmukh Singh took the initiative to place the Sikh case before the Education Commission. The Sabha remained active till the death of Professor Gurmukh Singh in 1898, and that of Giani Ditt Singh in 1901.

By 1901, more than a hundred other Singh Sabhas had been established in the Punjab. We may expect them, almost a priori, in district towns (like Rawalpindi, Lyallpur, Gurdaspur, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Ambala, Ferozepur, Karnal, Montgomery, Hoshiarpur and Sialkot) but Singh Sabhas were not confined even to towns (like Dera Baba Nanak, Khanna, Ropar, Dipalpur, Pind Dadan Khan, Sahiwal, Wazirabad, Hargobindpur, Muktsar and Tarn Taran); they were found in villages (like Bilga, Badowal, Chamkaur Sahib, Khumano. Lidhran and Gujjarwal). Besides the Singh Sabhas in the state capitals like Patiala, Nabha, Sangrur, Faridkot and Kapurthala, there was an active Singh Sabha in Bhasaur village in the Patiala state. Since each Singh Sabha professed, in theory, to

work for the entire Panth, some kind of coordination was needed. An early attempt in this direction was made in 1880, when a General Sabha was created at Amritsar for the Singh Sabhas of Lahore and Amritsar (and for others which might come up). In 1883, a resolution for starting a Sikh college was, in fact, passed in the General Sabha. It was soon reconstituted to form the Khalsa Diwan at Amritsar, with a patron, two vice-patrons, a president and a vice-president, and two secretaries. More than thirty Singh Sabhas came to be affiliated to the Diwan. But there was a good deal of tension amongst its leaders, particularly between Professor Gurmukh Singh and Baba Khem Singh Bedi. The Diwan split in 1885, with the rump at Amritsar presided over by Baba Khem Singh Bedi. A Khalsa Diwan was set up at Lahore in 1886 with the support of thirty Singh Sabhas. The leading members of the Diwan set up the Khalsa College Establishment Committee in 1890. Donations from Sikh rulers and landed gentry were encouraging. However, the Sikh and non-Sikh opponents of the Lahore leaders succeeded in getting the site of the college shifted from Lahore to Amritsar. Before the century ended, a school and a college were established at Amritsar to serve as models for Khalsa institutions elsewhere in the province.

The need of coordination was increasing, while the competence of the Khalsa Diwans at Amritsar and Lahore, to meet this need was decreasing. The death of Professor Gurmukh Singh and Giani Ditt Singh accentuated the feeling among some new leaders that a common platform for the Panth was absolutely necessary. On the initiative largely of Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, the Chief Khalsa Diwan was established at Amritsar in 1902. Its president was Bhai Arjan Singh of Bagrian and its secretary Sardar Sunder Singh himself. This 'aristocratic' top might suggest a close link with the Amritsar Singh Sabha, but it would be erroneous to link it with either Amritsar or Lahore. In due course, the majority of the Singh Sabhas accepted its lead to make it a representative body of the Panth. Its ideology was closer to that of the leaders of the Lahore Singh Sabha, and the scope of its concerns was

even wider. Directly, or indirectly, the Chief Khalsa Diwan helped the foundation of several important organizations, notably the Sikh Educational Conference and the Punjab and Sind Bank. The *Khālsā Advocate* became its official organ.

Between the early leaders of the Amritsar and Lahore Singh Sabhas, there were several differences-social, ideational, personal and generational.14 Their activities and attitudes can be appreciated in the light of these differences. Raja Bikram Singh of Faridkot patronized the Singh Sabha at Faridkot, and financed Giani Badan Singh's work on the annotation and interpretation of the $\bar{A}di$ Granth in order to undo the wrong done by Ernest Trumpp's $\bar{A}di$ Granth (1877). Kanwar Bikrama Singh of Kapurthala, who patronized the Amritsar Sabha and Diwan, was instrumental in founding the Singh Sabha at Jalandhar and remained its president till his death in 1887. Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia was closely associated with the management of the Golden Temple, and was able to persuade Maharaja Dalip Singh to return to the faith. For his activities in connection with Dalip Singh's return to the Punjab, Thakur Singh died as an exile in Pondicherry. These leaders belonged to the ruling houses and to old jāgīrdār families. Baba Khem Singh Bedi belonged to a Guru lineage which had become affluent and influential under the Khalsa Raj. Socially an equal, he was distinguished from the other leaders by his religious position. He deliberately imitated Guru Gobind Singh; his followers 'believed him to be an avtar whose mere touch would save them'. He used to distribute charms and his influence spread all over the northwest of the province. With consummate skill, he grew fabulously rich and had a number of supporters and proteges. He was knighted by the British Government.

The only aristocrat to be directly associated with the Lahore Singh Sabha and Khalsa Diwan was Sir Attar Singh, the chief of Bhadaur, who had been made subordinate to the Maharaja of Patiala after 1857-58. He was well educated and had published several books in English before the Singh Sabha was founded at Lahore. He was appreciative of the work of Professor Gurmukh Singh

first, and then that of Giani Ditt Singh. The moving spirit of the Lahore Sabha and Diwan was Professor Gurmukh Singh (whose father was a cook in the royal household of Kapurthala) who was patronized by Kanwar Bikrama Singh till he became a teacher at Oriental College, Lahore. Educated at Lahore, he actually belonged to a new generation, with new ideas and aspirations. He was joined by other like-minded young individuals, notably Jawahir Singh Kapur and Giani Ditt Singh. Jawahir Singh remained active in support of Sikh education and in the cause of the Sikh educated class for employment in government services, and their advancement in the new professions, generally arguing on the assumption of the 'distinctive character' of the Sikhs as 'a separate people'. Giani Ditt Singh proved to be the greatest publicist of the movement, lecturing and writing on Sikh history and theology and highlighting the achievement of the Gurus and the Singh martyrs, defining true Sikh doctrines and ritual practices, denouncing and ridiculing popular religion and belief in gods and goddesses, and defending the movement against all its opponents, whether Sikh or non-Sikh.

In 1885, Professor Gurmukh Singh demanded that Baba Khem Singh should not sit on a cushion (gadelā) in the presence of Gurū Granth Sahib, and this demand was supported by an overwhelming majority. Bhagat Lakshman Singh, though baptized by Baba Khem Singh, looked upon the Lahore leaders alone as 'the pioneers of the Singh Sabha Movement'. He observed later that the Baba had never forgiven them for two reasons: they 'insulted' him by removing his gaddī cushions, and they never acknowledged him as 'the Guru of the Sikhs'.15 After a sustained campaign to expel Gurmukh Singh from the Diwan, stopping him from addressing a congregation at Guru ka Bagh adjoining the Golden Temple, and threatening him with violence, Baba Khem Singh Bedi succeeded in getting him excommunicated in 1887 through a huka:nnāma issued by the Manager of the Golden Temple. Bawa Udey Singh, a nephew of Baba Khem Singh, sued Giani Ditt Singh on the plea that he had ridiculed the Baba, among others, in

the Khālsā Akhbār in 1887. In the process of litigation, the Khalsa Press and the Khālsā Akhbār had to be closed for some time.

Avtar Singh Vahiria, the most articulate opponent of the Lahore leaders, was a staunch follower of Baba Khem Singh Bedi. He was secretary of the Rawalpindi Singh Sabha, and editor of the Srī Gurmat Prakāshak, both launched under the patronage of Baba Khem Singh. Avtar Singh published eight books, relating to Sikh history, theology, religious practices and rituals. He expected a Sikh to give the same kind of allegiance to the descendents of the Sikh Gurus as a subject gave to the king. For him, Guru Nanak was an avtar, like Rama and Krishna. The Vedas and the Purānas were as authoritative as the Sikh scriptures. He subscribed to the ideal of varnāshrama, involving the notions of purity and pollution. He stood for the worship of the Goddess, the Brahmanical rites of passage, the parity of charan-pahul with the baptism of the double-edged sword, and the parity of the Sahajdhari Sikh with the Khalsa Singh, both of whom were identified as 'Hindu'. In retrospect, Avtar Singh Vahiria liked to believe that he was trying to safeguard 'the ancient customs, rites and rituals of the Sikh community'. The inspiration for his basic ideas and attitudes came from his living gurū, Baba Sir Khem Singh Bedi.16

IV

The new generation of leaders was in sympathy with the ideas and objectives of the Lahore leaders. Bhai Takht Singh had actually studied at Oriental College, Lahore, and remained in close association with Professor Gurmukh Singh and Giani Ditt Singh. He was deeply interested in female education and founded the Sikh Kanya Mahavidyala at Ferozepur which came to be regarded as the best institution for the education for Sikh girls over the decades. Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, a leading member of the Singh Sabha of Tarn Taran, was an associate of Giani Ditt Singh. Like him, he played a leading role in defining Sikhism and propagating Khalsa rituals; he promoted the use of Punjabi in Gurmukhi script and the idea of a distinct Sikh (Singh) identity. Baba Teja Singh of

the Bhasaur Singh Sabha and the Panch Khalsa Diwan was even more radical than the Lahore leaders in defining Sikhism and its scriptures, and in advocating Sikh rahit for women.¹⁷

Some of the Sikh writers, generally associated with either Amritsar or Lahore, are better understood as spokesmen of the Singh Sabha Movement in general. Giani Gian Singh was over fifty years old when the Amritsar Sabha was founded. His Panth Prakāsh (1880) was meant to be an improvement upon Ratan Singh Bhangu's work carrying the same title. His Tawārīkh Gurū Khālsā in prose was more comprehensive in its treatment of the subject. The appeal of his major works lay in the spirit in which they were written to celebrate the Khalsa tradition. Similarly, Giani Hazara Singh, who belonged to an old giānI family of Amritsar, interpreted the Vars of Bhai Gurdas in a manner that made him eminently acceptable to the Khalsa Singhs. Bhai Vir Singh articulated ideas and concerns which take him much closer to the Lahore leaders than to any of the early leaders of the Amritsar Singh Sabha. The Khālsā Samāchar, which he edited, is more of a continuation of the Khālsā Akhbār than a break with it.18 In his novels, too, Bhai Vir Singh valorized Khalsa ideology and Khalsa rahit.19

Movement was Bhai Kahn Singh of Nabha. Born in 1861, he was well acquainted with Sikh literature before he came into contact with Professor Gurmukh Singh and Giani Ditt Singh at Lahore in the early 1880s. His magnum opus, Gurshabad Ratnakar Mahan Kosh, was published in 1930 after a labour of fifteen years. It contains more than 64,000 entries having, direct or indirect, bearing on things related to Sikhism and Sikh history. His Gurmat Mārtand, published posthumously in 1962, was based on two of his works published for the first time in the late 1890s: the Gurmat Prabhākar and the Gurmat Sudhākar. The former contained all the teachings of the Gurus, arranged in alphabetical order, and supported by relevant quotations from the Gurbānī. The Gurmat Sudhākar was meant to identify the true teachings of the Guru in Sikh literature itself. Rejection of those elements which did not conform to the

true teachings was implied in this approach. Apart from the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh, Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal, more than a dozen major works of Sikh literature up to the time of Bhai Santokh Singh were used by Bhai Kahn Singh. The whole range of Sikh literature was used in his Ham Hindū Nahīn (1898) to demonstrate that Sikh doctrines and Sikh religious practices were meant to be and were, clearly different from those of the Hindus. In subsequent editions of this book, Bhai Kahn Singh developed the idea that the distinct identity of the Sikhs made them a distinct political entity.²⁰

Another writer and publicist of this generation had a peculiar importance because of his choice of English as the medium of communication. Born in 1863, Bhagat Lakshman Singh was educated at Rawalpindi and Lahore before he took up teaching History and English at the Mission Collegiate School of Rawalpindi. There he received baptism from Baba Khem Singh Bedi, and started the Khalsa Dharm-Parcharak Sabha. Reacting to attempts of the Arya Samaj writers, especially Bawa Chhajju Singh, to show that the Sikh Gurus were 'only Hindu reformers' who believed in the Vedas, he started the first Sikh English organ Khālsā in consultation with Bhai Jawahir Singh. He used this weekly to disseminate the view that 'the Sikh dispensation was an independent entity and not a subsidiary system, based on Hindu philosophy'. Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh had themselves made it clear that this dispensation was based on divine revelation. Bhagat Lakshman Singh was a witness to the shaving of Sikh Rahtias by the leaders of the Wachhowali Arya Samaj, and he used the columns of the Khālsā to carry on propaganda work on behalf of the newly formed Khalsa Sudhar Sabha to counteract the Arya programme of shuddhī. Bhagat Lakshman Singh had no doubt whatever that 'it was Baba Nanak himself who conceived the idea of establishing a separate church' and that Guru Gobind Singh gave it 'a final and distinct shape'. The protagonists of the Singh Sabha Movement, in his view, had carried forward the work of the Gurus. The recognition of the Sikh community as an 'independent political

entity' was a logical outcome of that movement. In retrospect Bhagat Lakshman Singh reflected that, though independently of Bhai Kahn Singh of Nabha, he was preaching through the Khālsā the message of Ham Hindū Nahīn. He wrote books on Guru Gobind Singh and the Sikh martyrs.²¹

V

With the support of scholars, creative writers and publicists as much as through their own lectures, writing and activity on the ground, the leaders of the Singh Sabha Movement were able to evolve a consensus. They were all agreed that the source of true Sikhism was the early Sikh tradition. This tradition was embodied in Sikh literature. By far, the most important source of Sikh belief was the Ādi Granth. Of equal importance were the genuine compositions of Guru Gobind Singh. The works of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal conformed to Gurbānī and, therefore, these works were more important than the rest. The Janamsākhīs, the Gurbilās literature, and the Rahitnāmas were useful in so far as they conformed to, and supplemented, the genuine Sikh tradition. On these assumptions, Sikh ideology, Sikh history, and the Sikh way of like could be systematized, revitalized and propagated through education and the print media.

Much that was un-Sikh in the lives of the contemporary Sikhs was to be discarded in the light of the Sikh tradition. The beliefs and practices of popular religion, which had nothing to do with Sikhism, were denounced and debunked. The cult of Sakhi Sarvar, Gugga Pir, Sitala and the like, came under attack. The gods and goddesses of 'Hindu mythology' were categorically rejected. Belief in one God involved the rejection of other deities and their incarnations. Belief in the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, and in no other, involved the rejection of all personal gurūs. The Dasam Granth was venerable because it contained the genuine compositions of Guru Gobind Singh. But Guruship was vested in the Ādi Granth alone. The Gurdwara, with congregational worship and community meal, was the most

important Sikh institution. But the Gurdwaras of the Panth were controlled and managed by those who were alien to the Sikh tradition. This accounted for un-Sikh practices in the Sikh sacred spaces. An appeal made to the Sikh community and British Government in 1887 brings out the importance of this concern. It points out that the management of the Golden Temple was based neither on legislation, nor on the principles of the Khalsa Panth. This carried the implication that only the Khalsa were entitled to manage the affairs of the Golden Temple.

For the Sikh way of life, it was necessary first to receive pahul, adopt the epithet Singh, carry a small kirpān, wear kachh and karā, keep uncut hair (kesh) and kanghā. The formulation of '5Ks' came handy to popularize these old features of the Khalsa rahit. Ban on smoking and insistence on eating jhatka meat came from the same Rahitnāma sources. The Sikh rites of birth and death and more so the rite of marriage acquired great importance in the context of shedding all Brahmanical practices. There were precedents in theory and practice, but there was no uniformity in modes and no universality in application. The institution of marriage involved issues of property. Therefore, it was seen as more important than the other rites of passage. This dimension of the institutions was highlighted by the death of Sardar Dyal Singh Majithia. His widow contested his will that alienated his ancestral property in favour of the Dyal Singh Trust. But the Chief Court decided in favour of the trustees. This gave great impetus to the demand for legal recognition of the Sikh rite of marriage. There was an overwhelming support for the Anand Marriage Bill when it was passed in 1909 despite opposition articulated by some Sikhs and many Hindus.22

The Anand Marriage Act had a direct bearing on Sikh identity. It may not be accidental that the leaders of the Chief Khalsa Diwan asked for separate electorates for the Sikhs for the first time in 1909, when separate electorates were created for Muslims. Political sanctity was imparted to separate electorates and weightage by the Lucknow Pact of 1916 between the Indian National Congress

and the All-India Muslim League. A Sikh deputation met the Governor General in 1917 to plead for separate electorates for the Sikhs. This was conceded. The Act of 1919 provided 10 seats for the Sikhs in the Provincial Council of 58. Sikh identity was legally and politically recognized as the culmination of the Singh Sabha Movement.

After the Act of 1919, politics became increasingly important for the people of the Punjab, as it did for people in the rest of India. Politics became dominant in the life of the Sikhs too. However, we may note that the intellectual impetus provided by the Singh Sabha Movement was overshadowed, but not retarded, by politics. Not only did writers like Bhai Vir Singh and Bhai Kahn Singh continue to write in the twentieth century, new scholars and writers of great stature appeared on the scene to study Sikh theology and Sikh history within the parameters of the Singh Sabha Movement. The most eminent among them were Professor Teja Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh and Professor Sahib Singh, all associated with the Khalsa College at Amritsar.

VI

Sikhism was a living faith in the early nineteenth century, and Singh identity was the most dominant identity among the Sikhs. The doctrine of Guru-Granth was the primary doctrine, and the $\bar{A}di$ Granth was regarded as the Guru. The Dasam-Granth was held in veneration; the $V\bar{a}rs$ of Bhai Gurdas and the Rahitnāmas were held in great esteem. The primary institution of the Sikhs was the gurdwara, with Harmandir Sahib as the most important place of Sikh pilgrimage, followed by Anandpur Sahib, Patna Sahib and Abchal Nagar (Nander). The doctrine of Guru Panth was not forgotten, but was overshadowed by the profession of the Sikh rulers to rule in the name of the Panth.

Before the end of Sikh rule, at least two individuals were gaining followers in their attempt to place the \bar{A} di Granth at the centre of Sikh religious and social life, with no role for Brahmanical rites and ceremonies in the lives of their followers: the Nirankaris

and the Namdharis. During the late nineteenth century, the Nirankaris laid great emphasis on the Sikh ceremonies of birth, marriage and death. The Namdharis adopted the Singh identity in their anti-British stance. They treated the \bar{A} di Granth as their scripture, with the Chandī dī Vār as a text of special importance. They began to treat Baba Ram Singh and his successors as personal gurus. Consequently, the doctrine of Guru-Panth and Guru-Granth had little relevance for them. They did not establish any new educational institutions, with the implication that they had no access to western science and social sciences or to English language and literature.

The Singh Sabhas were democratic and voluntary associations of Singhs who felt concerned about the affairs of the Sikh community as a whole. Understandably, therefore, they came to coordinate their efforts through the Chief Khalsa Diwan. Other institutions like the Punjab and Sind Bank, Sikh Educational Conference, and the Khalsa Tract Society were established to promote what they regarded as the collective interests of the Sikhs. They made effective use of the printing press and took to Anglo-Sikh education with great enthusiasm, establishing schools and colleges for boys and girls. They tried to promote Punjabi literature in Gurmukhi script. They were keen about the Khalsa rahit and acutely conscious of a distinct Sikh identity. They looked upon the Adi Granth as the Guru, the source of right belief and practice and the touchstone of separating truth from falsehood. They revived the doctrine of Guru-Panth, and demanded that no idols should be brought into the Golden Temple for worship, and that all the gurdwaras associated with their Gurus and Sikh martyrs should be managed and controlled by the representatives of the Khalsa Panth.

There was a great resurgence among the Sikhs in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, swelling their numbers. It was articulated through religious, social and cultural activities. In the early decades of the twentieth century this resurgence had begun to find political expression in diverse ways. Sikh identity

was emerging as the basis of politics. On the whole, the Singh Sabha Movement provided a comprehensive interpretation of the earlier Sikh tradition and combined it with the adoption of modern outlook, attitudes and institutions. The nature of its response to the colonial environment made it far more influential than the other Sikh movements, like the Nirankari and the Namdhari.

VII

The Singh Sabha movement left important legacies for the future. Apart from the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the Sikh Educational Conference, the most important legacy of the Singh Sabha was the struggle for the control and management of historic Gurdwaras. The Gurdwara 'reform movement' itself left the institutional legacy of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and the Shiromani Akali Dal. The impetus given to religious studies continued well into the twentieth century as reflected in the works of Bhai Jodh Singh, Professor Teja Singh and Professor Sahib Singh. In creative literature, Bhai Vir Singh was followed by Nanak Singh whose novels reflect the ethical concerns of Sikh resurgence.

However, Sikh resurgence cannot be attributed entirely to the Singh Sabha. Secular Punjabi literature became increasingly important in the late 1930s. Sikh art also reflected concerns other than religious. Even in politics, Sikh identity did not serve as the basis of all political articulation among the Sikhs before the end of colonial rule. Indian nationalism was represented by the Sikhs among the Ghadarites, the Babbar Alkalis, the Kirti Kisans, the Communists, and the Congressites. The most important expression of Sikh political articulation on the basis of Sikh identity was that of the Shiromani Akali Dal, and the more recent movement for Khalistan.

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10

BHAI KAHN SINGH ON SIKH IDENTITY

Only recently have a few scholars paid serious attention to Sikh identity, but the issue was raised more than a century earlier by Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha in his Ham Hindū Nahīn (We are not Hindu). The title serves as a reminder that the book was first written in Hindi, addressed more to Hindus than to Sikhs. It was published in Punjabi in 1898 but the title was retained. In a later edition, Bhai Kahn Singh used its Punjabi form, (asīn hindū nahīn), but not in the title. The Punjabi work was addressed not to the Hindus so much as to the Sikhs. This was because Bhai Kahn Singh knew that the Sikhs were being told that they were 'Hindu'. Being ignorant of Sikh scriptures and Sikh history, many Sikhs accepted the interpretation of Sikh tradition put forward by parties who were inimical towards Sikhism. These parties were anxious to see the Sikhs merged with the Hindu 'nation' (qaum).

Presumably on a complaint from Bhai Kanh Singh's opponents, his book was officially examined from the viewpoint of his intention and its effect. The official who read it in English translation expressed the view that it was not intended to hurt the feelings of others and it contained nothing derogatory to the faith of the Hindus. Some 'Hindus' tried to refute Bhai Kanh Singh's arguments in the press. His opponents also contrived that the Maharaja of Nabha may take action against him. The Maharaja asked the Sikhs of Amritsar for their views about the book. They were unanimous in support of Bhai Kanh Singh's exposition and submitted their own evidence to support the view that the Khalsa Panth was distinct from both Hindus and Muslims: it was the

Third Panth'. Bhai Kanh Singh sent a copy of his book to the Khalsa Diwan of Lahore. Its Joint Chief Secretary expressed the view that the distinct identity of the Khalsa Panth was well established in this publication with appropriate evidence from Sikh sacred literature. The Sarbat Khalsa of Gurdwara Tambu Sahib at Muktsar praised Bhai Kanh Singh for demonstrating that the Khalsa Panth was distinct and separate from Hindus and Muslims as the 'Third Panth'. This was the view of the Sarbat Khalsa at Damdama Sahib, Keshgarh Sahib and Huzur Sahib (Abchal Nagar). A large number of individuals wrote letters to Bhai Kanh Singh to appreciate his view.

Easily among the most influential Sikh publications of the early decades of the twentieth century, it has been reprinted several times afterwards for wide dissemination. Referred to as 'Panth Ratan, Bhai Sahib, Bhai Kahn Singh Ji, Nabha', the author is looked upon as a venerable scholar and the *Ham Hindū Nahīn* as a classic statement of Sikh identity. To look upon it as a polemic is to miss its real significance.

Bhai Kanh Singh presents his thesis in the form of a dialogue between a Hindu and a Sikh. This enabled him to give a comprehensive treatment to the subject. All possible arguments in support of the proposition that Sikhs were Hindu come from the Hindu speaker and all possible arguments in support of the proposition that Sikhs have a distinct identity come from the Sikh. The book appears to reflect the whole range of arguments used on both sides in the debate during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. That may partly be the reason why *Ham Hindū Nahīn* became the most comprehensive statement on the subject of Sikh identity. Our purpose in this paper is to analyse his exposition of Sikh identity and to assess its significance for Sikh politics in the twentieth century.

first part of about twenty pages relates to Sikh identity in rather general terms. According to the Hindu participant in the debate the Sikhs are Hindu because they have emerged from the Hindus, they eat food with Hindus, they enter into matrimony with Hindus, and they live in 'Hindustan'. Only recently have some Sikhs begun to talk of their separate identity. He goes on to add that the word 'Hindu' was derived from Sindhu, a Sanskrit word which means 'the conquerer of the wicked' and 'brave warrior'. The Sikh participant in the debate gives a longish reply. Talk of distinct identity was not an innovation of the contemporary Sikhs; they were simply following the injunctions of their Gurus. He quotes the \bar{A} di Granth to the effect that 'we are neither Hindu nor Musalman'. He quotes Bhai Gurdas to the effect that Sikhs are distinct from both Hindus and Muslims. In further support of his argument he quotes from a Janamsākhī, the Thirty-Three Savvyyey of Guru Gobind Singh, the Rahitnāmas of Bhai Chaupa Singh and Bhai Daya Singh, the Bhagat Ratnāvalī, the Panth Prakāsh, and the Gurpratāp Suriyā.3

On the point that the Sikhs had emerged from the Hindus, the Sikh participant refers to the semitic religions in which Christianity emerged from Judaism, and Islam arose out of both. In other words, just as Christianity and Islam were distinct religions so was the Sikh dharam. Furthermore, when a Hindu became Christian or Muslim he was not regarded as a Hindu. Therefore, a Hindu who becomes a Sikh cannot be regarded as a Hindu. On commensality, the Sikh participant refers to the Rahitnāmas which instruct the Khalsa not to observe distinctions of caste and not to eat with those who cut their hair. Similarly, on the question of matrimony the instruction is to have connections only with the Sikhs and not with those who cut their hair. If Sikhs are Hindu because they live in 'Hindustan', why the Christians and the Muslims who live in this country are not Hindu? The name 'Hindu' was given to the people of this country by outsiders. It does not occur in the ancient Indian scriptures and the epics. That was why the Arya Samajists insisted that they should not be called

'Hindu' and their country should not be called 'Hindustan'. However, the Sikhs had no objection to the use of the word 'Hindustan' for the country and, if 'Hindu' means 'Indian', they had no objection to the term being used for them.⁴

Another line of argument which Bhai Kanh Singh puts into the mouth of his Hindu participant brings in the evidence of Sikh scriptures. 'Hindū slāhī sālāhan' in the Granth Sahib is taken to mean that Hindu beliefs and practices are approved. The Sikh participant quotes the whole passage to show that far from being a praise of Hindu mat the passage in question underlines the importance of praising God and appropriating the True Name. The Hindu participant then quotes from the Chhakkey Chhand, attributed by him to Guru Gobind Singh, to the effect that the Khalsa Panth was meant to spread Hindu dharma. Therefore, Sikh mat was a Hindu panth, like the Bairagī and Sanyāsī panths. The Sikhs, who equated panth with qaum, did not realize that it was necessary to have larger numbers to be a qaum. The Sikhs counted merely in lacs. The Sikh participant points out that the Chhand in question was not an authentic composition of Guru Gobind Singh. Even if taken to be authentic for the sake of argument, this composition refers also to the triumph of the Khalsa as 'the third panth'. The other two panths being Hindu and Muslim, it was also clear that the Sikh Panth was to be treated as a qaum. According to the Hindu participant, innumerable sākhīs proved that Sikhs were Hindu. The Sikh participant responds to this general observation by saying that the Sikhs regarded as authentic only those parsangs which did not contradict Gurbāṇī. According to the Hindu participant Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life for the sake of Hindus precisely because he was a Hindu. The Sikh participant replies that it was a cardinal principle of Sikh dharam to protect the oppressed. Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life for a principle and not for the sake of Hindus. This was the principle for which the Sikhs made sacrifices for the country and in the cause of justice. They looked upon Hindus as their

'brothers', but they were not Hindu by religion (mazhab). They look upon Christians and Muslims also as their 'brothers'.

III

About a score of points are discussed in the second part of over a hundred pages. It may clarify the two opposing viewpoints better if we take up each set of arguments together. Understandably, the arguments in support of the proposition that the Sikhs are Hindu are less elaborate. Nevertheless, a number of issues are raised by the Hindu participant in the dialogue. It is important to note that the Hindu participant is not an Arya Samajist but a Sanatanist.⁶

The first issue relates to scriptures. The references to the Vedas in the Adi Granth, it is contended, are only to those hymns which talk of gian. But the scope of the Vedas is not confined to giān for they deal with karma and upāsanā as well. The implication is that the Vedas are not criticized in their entirety. Alternatively, the authors of the \bar{A} di Granth did not have a thorough knowledge of the Vedas. In any case there are several statements in the $\bar{A}di$ Granth which recognize the sanctity and authority traditionally associated with the Vedas. As many as eight quotations are given from the \bar{A} di Granth which do give the impression as if the authority and sanctity of the Vedas is acknowledged. In a few of these quotations are included Shāstras, Smritīs and Purāņas. There is a reference also to the six schools of philosophy. Another line of argument is that Guru Nanak was a Bedi. Obviously, his ancestors at one time were known for their knowledge of the Vedas and their adherence to the Vedic Dharma. The Bachittar Nātak is quoted on this point: 'They who mastered the Vedas came to be known as Bedi; they propagated actions based on dharama'.7

The second issue relates to the system of caste (jātī-varn) among Sikhs. The claim that they did not subscribe to the varnāshrama ideal stands refuted by Guru Nanak's regret about the obtilterabon of varna-maryādā in his days. He castigates the Khatrī for discarding his dharama and adopting the language of the mlechh: 'the whole world has become one caste and there is

no dharma left'. In the Janamsākhī of Bhai Bala, Lalo the carpenter presumes as a shūdra that Guru Nanak would not eat food cooked by him and suggests that Guru Nanak himself may prepare his food. He had seen the sacred thread (janjū) worn by Guru Nanak. The point at issue therefore is whether or not high caste Sikhs wore the sacred thread, a practice which had a bearing on the question of varna-maryādā. A quotation from Guru Nanak's compositions is cited to confirm that he used to wear the sacred thread. In the Bachittar Nātak it is stated that Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life to save the tilak and janjū of the Hindus. Guru Gobind Singh wrote Savvayyā in praise of Brahmans and instructed his followers to give dān to them. In the Sukhmanī the Sikhs are instructed to revere the pandit who understands the Vedas, Smritīs and the Purānas.8

The third point relates to the idea of incarnation. Several parsangs in the Dasam Granth prove, it is contended, that Guru Gobind Singh believed in avtars. A quotation carries the import that one could attain liberation from transmigration by worshipping Krishna. Even in the \bar{A} di Granth there is a passage in which various avtars are mentioned with the idea that they were to be worshipped. Another related issue was that of the worship of the Goddess among the Sikhs. There is a statement in the Bachittar Nātak that Guru Gobind Singh invoked the Goddess (Kalika). The whole of his Chandī Charitra is written in praise of the Goddess (Chandi): the merit of reciting her praise is underlined. Above all, in the Sikh prayer (ardās) the Goddess (Bhagwatī) is invoked first of all. Since the term used in Gurmukhi is bhagautī, the Hindu participant suggests that Guru Gobind Singh originally wrote it in the Persian script in which it was hard to make a distinction between bhagwatī and bhagautI, and the Gurmukhi scribe accepted the latter reading out of ignorance.9

The fifth point relates to idol-worship. It is stated in the Granth Sahib that Namdev attained God through the worship of an idol and that Dhanna found God in a piece of stone. The references in the Vārs of Bhai Gurdas to Dhanna and Namdev

prove further that the Sikhs had no objection to idol-worship. Furthermore, the Sikhs regard the Granth Sahib as the physical form (sarūp) of the Guru and offer karhā in a dish by way of bhog to the Granth Sahib. This is similar to idol-worship.10 According to the Hindu participant, Guru Nanak observed his father's shrādh only two days before his own death. The Sikh Gurus used to go to sacred places for pilgrimage. In a composition of Guru Amar Das there are clear instructions regarding what was to be done after his death, including the kathā of the Purāna by Keso Gopal. The verse also refers to pind, pattal, kiryā, dīvā and phull.11 This was meant to show that these practices were commonly observed by Hindus and Sikhs. Indeed, the Hindu participant asserts that no injunction of the Gurus forbids Sikhs to perform their-rites in accordance with the Hindu Shāstras, and there was no injunction to have separate Sikh rites (gur-maryādā). The chhants, ghorian and lavan, composed by the Gursus and recited by the Sikhs at the time of marriage, were not meant to be taken literally for the actual conduct of rites (vivhār); they were meant to be taken as metaphors. Even if it is conceded that Sikhs have their own sanskars, the symbols like the kesh and the kachh were adopted as temporary measures in a situation of armed conflict. They were no longer necessary. Similarly it was not necessary to keep uncut hair; the first nine Gurus had no kesh.12

The Hindu participant raises three more points. The first relates to the basic principles of Hindu Dharma which, he maintains, are shared by the Sikhs with the Hindus. The first principle was to regard the *Vedas*, which formed the basis of Hindu Dharma, as true. To subscribe to belief in God, good and evil, heaven and hell, was the second. The five other basic principles were: to seek *muktī* from transmigration, to regard *varnāshrama* as the ideal social order, to cremate the dead, to protect the cow, and to uphold the idea of purity and pollution. The second point made by the Hindu participant is that even if the Sikh *dharam*, Sikh principles, and Sikh rites and ceremonies were different from those of the Hindus, the Sikhs were governed by

the Hindu Law. Thirdly, it was not really politic on the part of the Sikhs to separate themselves from the Hindus. All such attempts increased mutual hostility. The Sikhs were small in numbers and they were bound to suffer great loss through separation from the Hindus. By aligning themselves with the Hindus, who had now become important, the Sikhs could increase their own importance.¹³

IV

According to the Sikh participant, the Sikhs have their own scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. Other religious books among the Sikhs are judged as authentic to the extent to which they accord with the Granth. Justification for this exclusive status of the Granth Sahib is found in the compositions of the Gurus and in other Sikh literature. Guru Amar Das emphasized the superiority of the bani of the Guru over other banis which are looked upon as 'unripe' (kachchī). Gurbānī is the light of the world; it leads to the Divine Name. According to Guru Ram Das, Gur-sabad is above everything else. The Sikhs of the Guru regard it as true: the creator himself made the Guru to utter it. What the Gurus say about other scriptures should be seen in conjunction with the indispensability of the true bani underlined by the Gurus. About a score of quotations from the \bar{A} di Granth, the works of Bhai Gurdas, the Bachittar Nātak, the Rām Avtār and the Thirty-Three Savvyyey underline the inefficacy of the Vedas, Smritis and Shāstras for attaining to liberation. The semitic books are often bracketed with Hindu religious scriptures. Bhai Gurdas includes the Purānas, the Epics and the Gīta in the list of religious books which stood rejected in comparison with Gurbāṇī. The Sikh participant goes on to explain that the entire message of Gurbānī is meant for all human beings.

Furthermore, the Sikh conception of karma, upāsanā and giān is totally different from what they mean among the Hindus. The lines and phrases quoted by the Hindu participant are refuted by the Sikh participant either by providing the full text to explain the correct meaning or by quoting other passages for clarifying

the meaning, or by doing both. The final conclusion drawn on the point of scriptures is that the only valid religious book for the Sikhs is Guru Granth Sahib, and no other scripture.¹⁴

On the issue of the varna system, the Sikh participant quotes passages from Manu and other authorities which exalt the position of the Brahman and his rights and privileges, and which underline the disabilities of the Shūdra and his over-all depression and deprivation. The message of Guru Nanak is meant for all the four varnas and even for the chandals. The path is open to all because the whole of mankind is believed to have been created from the same light. Guru Nanak castigated the Khatrīs for abandoning their faith. Had he believed that Persian language was mlechhbhāshā he would not have composed in Persian, and Guru Gobind Singh would not have written his Zafarnāma in Persian. The idea of equality in the Sikh Panth is underlined at many places in the Adi Granth and in the Vars of Bhai Gurdas. More than a score of quotations on this point are cited from these and other sources like the Akāl Ustat, the Gurpratāp Suriyā and the Rahitnāmas of Bhai Chaupa Singh and Bhai Daya Singh. The sākhī of Lalo the carpenter demonstrates that Guru Nanak ate food cooked by a Shūdra. For that reason alone the point about the sacred thread loses its significance. The line quoted from the Adi Granth by the Hindu participant, placed in its proper context, also shows that Guru Nanak discarded the distinctions of caste. In the Bachittar Nātak, quoted by the Hindu participant, tilak and janjū were clearly the sacred mark and the sacred thread of the Brahmans who had approached Guru Tegh Bahadur for help. An incident narrated in the Dabistān-i Mazāhib indicates that Sikhs attached no sanctity to the sacred thread even before the Khalsa was instituted. Furthermore, the Gurus wanted their Sikhs to give dan not to Brahmans but to Sikhs. The savvyyāys of Guru Gobind Singh were not in praise of Brahmans but in favour of the Khalsa who were to receive all kinds of gifts. In the Sukhman I too Guru Arjan emphasizes the qualities which make any person a true brahman (and not the Brahman of varnāshrama). The pandit of the Hindu

social order is denounced by Guru Nanak and his successors. Appropriate quotations are given from the compositions of Guru Nanak, Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjan on the point. 15

The idea of incarnation stands discarded in Sikh dharam. God is never born; he never dies; he does not take any form. The so-called avtars are God's creatures, and they too are in search of emancipation. In support of this view, quotations are given from the Adi Granth, the Shabad Hazārey, the Thirty-Three Savvyyey and the works of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal. If Krishna is mentioned in the Krishan Avtār, it must be remembered that this work was meant to be a free version of a received account, and the ideas it contained could not be taken as the views of Guru Gobind Singh. In the Mārū Sohle, Guru Arjan refers to beliefs prevalent among others; his own view is expressed in the last line, indicating his preference for the True Name. The use of epithets for God derived from the names of avtars did not mean that God of the Sikh dharam becomes equated with them. Rather, a new meaning is given to those epithets. The transformation in the meaning is comparable to the transformation of allah as the divinity of pre-Islamic Arabs into Allah of the Prophet Muhammad, or the transformation of the Teuton 'god' into the Christian God in English.16

As God's creatures, gods and goddesses stand bracketed with avtārs. They were all a part of māyā. Like the other creatures of God, they seek emancipation. Neither Brahma nor Bishan nor Mahesh can be equated with God. They all serve God who alone is to be worshipped. These ideas find support in the Ādi Granth, the Akāl Ustat, the Thirty-Three Savvyyey, the Jap Sāhib, the Shabad Hazārey, the Rahitnāma of Bhai Daya Singh, and the works of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal. The use of the term Kalika in the Chandī dī Vār is used for Akāl Purkh and not for the Goddess. In the same composition Durga is mentioned as created by God. Since the Chandī dī Vār was a popular version of the Durgā Saptshati, every idea mentioned in the composition could not be ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh. In the Bachittar Nātak, Guru

Gobind Singh is explicit on the point that none other than God is to be worshipped.19 To argue that ritualistic purification was hygienic was a futile rationalization because the ritual itself was based on superstition.20 Similarly, the practice of plastering the ground with cow dung and drawing a circle around (chaunkākār) which, among other things, was insisted upon by Manu was denounced by the Gurus. Bhai Chaupa Singh in his Rahitnāma forbids the use of cow-dung in the langar. The author of the Gurpratāp Suriyā states that the Sikh sacred food (deg) was meant for all the four varnas. The author of the Dabistān-i Mazāhib also conveys the impression that there was no restriction on food among the Sikhs. The only criterion was that it should not be harmful for the body. 21 Quotations from the $\bar{A}di$ Granth, the $V\bar{a}rs$ of Bhai Gurdas, the Rahitnāma of Bhai Daya Singh and the Gurpratāp Suriyā support the view that fasting on days like the Janamashtmi, Ram Naomi and Ekadasi was rejected by the Gurus and their followers. Observing fast was a sign of ignorance (agiān).²² So was the notion of auspicious and inauspicious days and times. Quotations from the Adi Granth, the works of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal, and the Gurbilas Patshahī Chhey show that the notions of mahūrat, tith, vār and sagan were discarded by the Gurus and their followers.23 The idea of the efficacy of mantras, tantras and jantras in enhancing the spiritual and physical prowess of individuals, giving them supranatural powers or longevity or sexual virility, stood discarded in Gurmat.24 The performance of hom or yagg was also discarded. These views are supported with quotations from the Adi Granth, the works of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal, and the Dabistān-i Mazāhib.25 In response to Swami Daya Nand's insistence on hom as the key ritual of the Aryas, it is argued that the supposed purification of the atmosphere involved a great loss of materials which could be more useful to human beings if put to their ordinary use.26

The rites of kiryā, shrādh and tīrath are taken up together as related to death. The Janamsākhī statement that Guru Nanak observed shrādh for his father only two days before his own death,

is not based on authentic information. The correct position is depicted in the Guru Nanak Prakāsh in which Guru Nanak rejects the practice of shrādh. The Sadd of Guru Amar Das in Rāg Rāmkalī, which is supposed to prescribe kiryā after his death, is not properly understood. It was written with reference to a hymn of Guru Nanak in which 'Keso' refers to God. Therefore the Keso Gopal of the Sadd is no other than God. Furthermore at several places in his compositions, Guru Amar Das himself denounces the pandit and what he does.27 Mourning with loud lamentations was denounced by Guru Nanak. He prepared karhā parshād after Mardana's death, according to a Janamsākhī. According to the Giān Ratnāvalī, kiryā was replaced by ardās, kīrtan and karhā parshād. The ceremony of bhadan was not to be observed, according to the Gursobha and Bhai Chaupa Singh. The Gurus went to the places of Hindu pilgrimage not as pilgrims but to preach their own message to the people assembled there.28

The Gur-maryādā regarding birth, initiation and marriage had nothing to do with Hindu mat. Guru Amar Das uttered the Anand at the birth of his grandson and instructed the Sikhs to recite this composition at the birth of a child. Guru Arjan did this, as referred to in one of his hymns, at the birth of his son Hargobind. Guru Ram Das composed chhants, ghorian and lavan for the occasion of marriage. A close attention to these compositions makes one realize that they were meant to be used on the occasion of marriage. They refer to the bridegroom and the marriage party, the young married couple, and the custom of displaying dowry (dāj). Guru Gobind Singh performed the marriage of a Sikh girl in accordance with this rite. Bhai Daya Singh in his Rahitnāma insists that Sikhs should not adopt any ceremony of marriage other than 'anand'. For initiation Guru Nanak introduced the practice of charan pahul, which was followed by all his successors before Guru Gobind Singh introduced khande kā amrit. He also instructed the Sikhs to observe rahit and adopt certain symbols like kachh and karā. There is no evidence to suggest that Khalsa symbols were meant to be a temporary measure for the times of war. There was no certainty that wars had ended for all times to come. The Sikh Gurus used to keep uncut hair (kesh). There are several references in the \bar{A} di Granth to the long hair serving metaphorically as a fan or a chaur.²⁹

Responding to the seven 'universal' principles mentioned by his Hindu counterpart, the Sikh participant denies that the Vedas are the basis of Sikh dharam. Belief in God, pun and pāp, or reward and punishment, is not confined to Hindus or Sikhs. Similarly, belief in transmigration was not confined to Hindus and Sikhs in the history of mankind. The Sikhs did not subscribe to the ideal of varnāshrama. Cremation was not the only practice among either Hindus or Sikhs., While jal-parwāh was known to both Hindus and Sikhs there were Hindus who practised burial rather than cremation. Cow protection was rationally desirable, but the Sikhs did not have the same kind of attitude towards the cow as the Hindus. The dung and urine of the cow were not used by the Sikhs in any way similar to their use among the Hindus. In the Vedas, there are references to gomedha and goghana, the former in the context of ritual sacrifice and the latter involving the slaughter of a cow for entertaining a special guest. Finally, the Sikhs did not subscribe to the idea of pollution. Thus, the basic principles which the Hindu participant maintained were common to both Hindus and Sikhs are denied by the Sikh participant mainly because of their absence in Sikhism or among the Sikhs. He goes on to add that the principles to be found among the Hindus were innumerable like the Hindu gods. Consequently, even the census reports failed to clarify one's ideas about who was a Hindu. That there was no acceptable definition was not surprising, because the word 'Hindu' did not occur in the sacred books of the Hindus. They were the only people in the world to have accepted a name given to them by outsiders.30

On the question of Hindu Law being applicable to the Sikhs, the Sikh participant points out that the law operative in the country was no longer the Hindu Law. It was mostly customary law that was operative among the Sikhs. There were no legal codes based

entirely on religious books. Laws based on religious books did not come into operation immediately on the appearance of a new religious system. This did not happen in Islam or Christianity. So far as the Sikhs were concerned, the basic principles had been enunciated in Gurbānī and the Rahitanamas. The Anand Marriage Act had also been passed. Thus, the possibility of preparing a Sikh code of laws had been created. Sir Lepel Griffin had observed that the Sikhs had abandoned the Hindu faith, and with it the system of laws which is the basis of that faith, and for fifty years the Sikh chiefs had followed laws of succession which were altogether different. To invoke the legal authority of Manu and the Shāstras by Hindu converts to Sikhism would have been as unreasonable as to invoke the shari'at by Muslim to the Sikh faith.³¹

Whether or not they were Hindu, was it politic on the part of the Sikhs to insist that they must be treated as a separate people? The answer is quite unambiguous. No progress (unti) is possible without becoming independent (sautantar). To be a branch (shākh) of another qaum is to remain in slavery (ghulāmī), and such subordination involved all kinds of depression. The Sikhs loved their neighbours and looked upon their tribulations as their own, but they could not be treated as a part of another people in terms of religious and social principles. They had already suffered for becoming one (ikk-mikk) with the Hindus. The Sikhs lost in numbers, and their wealth went into the hands of Brahmans through dan and dakshina. The vested interests among the Hindus made every possible effort to dissuade Sikhs from retaining their religious symbols. Many Sikh families reverted to the Hindu fold and many others entered into matrimony with Hindus. While the Sikhs were told that Sikhism did not lie in the kesh or the kachh, no one told the Hindus that their dharma did not lie in the sacred thread $(janj\bar{u})$ or the tuft (bodī). If mutual hostility was increasing it was due to the hostile attitude of some Hindus towards the Sikh faith. Aggression came precisely from those Hindus whose interests were bound to be hit if Sikhs were treated as a separate qaum. They were keen to own the Sikhs in self-interest. They were joined

by the self-styled gurūs among the Sikhs. These selfish people published books and articles to show that the Sikhs were Hindu.³²

Not to create hostility among various religious communities was in the interest of the country as a whole. Differences of religion should not be allowed to become a cause of conflict. Everyone should have the freedom to pursue and propagate one's religion. However, everyone should do this in such a manner that does not create resentment among others. The Sikhs should know that they are not Hindu, but they should also know that it is their duty to love their countrymen as brothers and to look upon all the peoples of Bharat as inseperable organs of the same body.33 These obviously are the sentiments of Bhai Kanh Singh himself. He expressed these views directly in his 'appeal' to the reader in 1920. Sikh dharam is different from Hindu and other dharmas, and Sikhs are a separate qaum. It does not follow, however, that they should criticize other dharmas or oppose other people. Not to regard the desh-bhāīs as a part (ang) of the same body is to invite curse from the land of one's birth (janam-bhūmi). We have one father, and we are all his children. All are our friends and we are friendly towards everyone. They who create animosity and division by mixing up matters of religion (dharam), politics (nītī) and society (samāj) are bound to suffer here (lok) and in the hereafter (parlok). They do not deserve the title of 'human beings', much less the title of 'God's progeny'. They who belong to different dharmas and yet regard themselves as a part of one 'Nation' receive respect and honour from civilized nations.34

V

We have followed the text of Ham Hindū Nahīn rather closely in order to ensure that we do not miss any relevant point in Bhai Kahn Singh's exposition of Sikh identity. If we set aside the sequence of his arguments and omit minor detail, we can present his basic thesis in terms more easily understandable. It is quite clear that Bhai Kahn Singh wrote his book at a time when communitarian consciousness was gaining ground among an

increasing number of people in the Punjab, as in the rest of the country. In other words, the emergence of communitarian consciousness was not confined to the Sikhs.

The most important aspect of Bhai Kanh Singh's book from our viewpoint is his thesis that a distinctive Sikh identity was not a new thing. The authorities which he invokes in support of this thesis were nearly all pre-colonial: the Adi Granth which was compiled in 1604-05, the works of Bhai Gurdas written mostly in the early decades of the seventeenth century, the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh and others in the Dasam Granth which were written mostly before the end of the seventeenth century, the works of Bhai Nand Lal as a contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh, the Gursobha which was written soon after Guru Gobind Singh's death, the Rahitnamas which were composed largely in the eighteenth century, the Gurbilās Pātshāhī Das which was written towards the end of the century, the Gurbilās Pātshāhī Chhey and the works of Bhai Santokh Singh which were composed in the early nineteenth century. At a few places the evidence of Janamsākhīs, which were compiled in the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth century, is also invoked. This literature was not only pre-colonial but also voluminous, and it covered a wide range. A present day scholar can be more critical in accepting the evidence of this literature on empirical realities, but for ideas and norms it is not easy to disagree with Bhai Kahn Singh. In other words, his exposition of the normative appears to be sounder than his inferences about the empirical realities.

Sikh scriptures according to Bhai Kahn Singh underlines belief in one God, reject the existence of gods and goddesses as independent entities, discard the ideas of incarnation, and reject idol-worship. Pilgrimage to places traditionally regarded as sacred has no merit and is therefore denounced and discarded. The only authoritative scripture for the Sikhs is the Adi Granth which came to be regarded as the Guru. The Sikh mode of worship consisted of the recitation of Gurbānī after a bath early in the morning, participation in kIrtan and recitation of Gurbānī in the evening.

The Sikh mode of initiation consisted of baptism (amrit), as charan-pahul first and then as khande kī pahul. The Sikh code of conduct related to the personal and social life of the Sikhs. In the religious symbols of the Sikhs, three items are specifically mentioned as important: kesh, kachh and karā. With the kesh was associated the turban, and kanghā. The identity indicated by these items is the Khalsa identity. However, Bhai Kanh Singh is quite categorical on the point that the Sahajdharis and the pre-Khalsa Sikhs also possessed a distinctive identity.³⁵

Nanak's denunciation of mourning as the basis for the rites after death. For birth, his earliest reference is to Guru Amar Das, for the rites of marriage he refers to Guru Ram Das. By the eighteenth century there was a good deal of insistence on all the Sikh rites of passage. For commensality, the principle was to make no distinction of caste. The Sikhs used to eat together in the *langar*. For matrimony, Sikhs were to confine their relations to Sikhs. All human beings were God's children and the path of liberation was open to them all. The caste system was discarded by the Gurus and their followers. Thus, the distinct identity of the Sikhs was based on their religious beliefs and practices, their exclusive scripture which guided them like the Guru, their distinctive rites of passage, and their social usages. This distinctive identity was deliberately created by the Gurus.

VI

The first question that we may ask is, was Bhai Kanh Singh right in maintaining that a distinct socio-religious identity of the Sikhs was not a development of the colonial period? The question of Sikh identity has been discussed by a few scholars in recent years. We can turn to them for an answer.

Daljeet Singh has discussed Sikh identity with reference to the spiritual experience of the Gurus and their concept of God, their ideology, the character of the Sikh religious system, scripture, and the Sikh Panth and its institutions. His discussion ends with

the time of Guru Gobind Singh, carrying the implication that Sikh identity was clearly established during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his view, the principal attributes of God and the spiritual experience of the Gurus gave an identity to Sikhism that was new in Indian history. The repeated stress of the Gurus on 'the reality of the world' was an important departure from the Indian religions of their times. The goal of Sikhism was to work in line with God's 'altruistic will'. This too was an important departure from the goal generally prescribed in Indian religions, that is merger in Brahman or extinction in Nirvana. Ethics were placed at the centre of Sikhism: 'Everything is lower than truth; higher still is truthful living or conduct'. The ideal man of Sikhism, the Gurmukh, lived God in life and carried out his 'altruistic will'. Like Judaism and Islam, Sikhism was a whole-life system. Unlike them, it was free from exclusiveness and monasticism. Indian systems were dichotomous, making a sharp distinction between the spiritual and the empirical life. But Guru Nanak organized a system of householders who participated in all walks of life and remained socially responsible. Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture, is the most emphatic pronouncement about 'the distinct and independent identity of Sikhism'. The foundations of a new social order were laid by Guru Nanak himself with the institution of sangat, the institution of langar, the institution of Guruship, and the ideal of social commitment. From this foundation, the Sikh Panth logically developed into the order of the Khalsa by the end of the seventeenth century. Sikh identity, thus was not something created by external circumstances: it was consciously created by the Gurus themselves.36

W.H. McLeod attaches much less importance to ideology and does not see the same kind of importance in the work of Guru Nanak as Daljeet Singh does. According to McLeod, the permanence of the Nanak Panth was ensured by ritual and administrative measures introduced by the early Gurus. The twin concepts of sangat and kirtan are emphasized in the Janamsākhīs as a regular feature of the corporate life of the Nanak Panth. The

Sikhs had their distinctive mode of salutation and places of worship called dharmsals: they cherished the characrteristically Sikh ideal of nam-dan-isnan. By the end of the sixteenth century, the leaders of the Nanak Panth had developed a strong sense of panthic identity. In general terms this identity was defined by a common loyalty, by common association, and by common practice. The path enunciated by the Gurus was open to men and women of all castes. In other words, caste had nothing to do with access to liberation. However, it did not mean a total obliteration of caste identity. Also, the general body of the believers was not so clearly conscious of distinct identity as the elite of the Panth. The institution of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh sharpened the distinctive identity of his followers. They also remained visible throughout the eighteenth century. By the end of the century the Khalsa ideal was clearly dominant and to some foreign observers it seemed that all Sikhs were in fact Sikhs of the Khalsa. Actually, however, the non-Khalsa Sikhs too were there as members of the Sikh Panth. But the dominant Sikh identity was the Khalsa identity. This was the position in the early nineteenth century when the British annexed the Punjab.37

Harjot Oberoi ignores Guru Nanak altogether and thinks that there was 'no fixed Sikh identity' in the early Guru period. Without pausing to consider what exactly is meant by the epithet 'fixed', we may go on to notice that in Oberoi's view 'the Khalsa was instituted to finally end the ambiguities of Sikh religiosity'. The Khalsa was a new person with a concrete identity. His 'personhood' came to be confirmed through an unusual initiation ceremony, called *khande ki pahul*, 'the like of which had never existed before in South Asia'. The Khalsa was to maintain unshorn hair and to carry arms on his person. The Khalsa brought forth its own *dharam*, giving it the distinctive name of *rahit*. The manuals called *rahitnama* cover all domains of human life, ranging from how the Khalsa shall eat to laying down the nature of piety. The Khalsa introduced new rites, particularly to mark birth, initiation, and death. These rites gradually turned 'a fluid identity into a distilled,

enduring form, supplemented by a long inventory of tabooed behaviour. The Khalsa established their own control over Sikh sacred space and laid down norms for its management. Contemporary records point towards Khalsa identity gradually 'becoming hegemonic within Sikh tradition'. The ideas of the Guru Granth and the belief in the Guru Panth provided links with the early Sikh tradition.

Unlike McLeod, Oberoi thinks that the Khalsa tradition gave place in the early nineteenth century to what he calls the Sanatan Sikh tradition. The Sahajdhari Sikhs occupied a more important position in the Santan tradition than during the eighteenth century. Ideological differences and 'deviant' practices were tolerated much more in this tradition than among the Khalsa of the eighteenth century. The Sanatan Sikh tradition was more tolerant of caste distinctions too. There were several identities among the Siksh during the early nineteenth century, all more or less equally important.38 Oberoi's treatment of this tradition tends to cloud the fact that the majority of the members of the Sikh Panth were Singhs and not Sahajdharis even during the early nineteenth century. For our present purpose it is enough to conclude that all the three scholars we have invoked support Bhai Kahn Singh in his basic thesis that a distinctive Sikh identity had emerged much before the colonial period. There are differences of detail, emphases and sophistication among these three scholars. However, the basic point is clear. There was an earlier Sikh tradition which Bhai Kanh Singh could and did invoke. Notwithstanding its high tides or its low ebbs, it was a continuous tradition.

The second question that we can ask is why did Bhai Kanh Singh look upon the issue of Sikh identity as of vital importance to the Sikhs? He had a vague apprehension that the attitude of a section of the Hindus towards the Sikh faith and its representatives was undergoing change. We happen to know better about the kind of change that was coming about. The term Hindu does not occur in the ancient Indian scriptures; it was used by outsiders for the Indian. We know that its use was quite common in Persian

and Arabic literature by the tenth century of the Christian era. 'Hindu' in this usage meant 'Indian'. The term used for the country was either 'Hind' as in al-Beruni's *Kitāb al-Hind* or 'Hindustan' as in the *Tuzuk-i Bāburī*. With the coming of the Turks, Persians, Arabs and others into India and the conversion of a considerable number of Indians to Islam, 'Hindu' came to be contrasted with 'Muslim'. The religious criterion was introduced by inversion. What is more important, the identity 'Hindu' came to be accepted by many who were called Hindu. In this sense, every non-Muslim Indian was Hindu.

A much more important change occurred during the nineteenth century. The term 'Hinduism' came into currency. It was meant to refer simply to the 'religion of the Hindus'. But there was no single religion. The process of exclusion and inclusion began almost simultaneously. Affinities were perceived between Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism, and differences were noticed between all these on the one hand and Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism on the other. The Brahmanical traditions appeared to represent 'Hinduism'. The major Sanskrit texts 'rediscovered' by the Europeans appeared to support this construct.

Furthermore, the western writers who took interest in 'Hinduism' were often Christian missionaries, full of evangelical fervour and optimistic about a dramatic success in their missionary enterprise. For various reasons, they generally attacked 'Hinduism' in strong terms, trying to demonstrate that it was spiritually bankrupt and morally corrupt. Before long, educated Indians rose in defence of 'Hinduism', unconsciously accepting the monolithic construct in the process. The beginning of this development can be seen in the career of Raja Ram Mohan Rai from a cosmopolitan humanist to the founder of the Brahmo Samaj. In spite of all their catholicity and appreciation for Christianity, the Brahmos worked for 'reformed Hinduism'. When they came to the Punjab many people felt attracted to Brahmo 'reform'. The most notable Sikh who dedicated his life to the Brahmo Samaj was Dyal Singh Majithia. He is remembered every year by the trustees of The

Tribune which was his creation, besides the Dyal Singh College and the Dyal Singh Library. On his death in 1898, his widow went to the court to contest his will for creating these institutions with his property. She lost. It was popularly believed that she lost because Dyal Singh was regarded as a Hindu. This, inter multa alia, became a cause for the passage of the Anand Marriage Act in 1909. What is relevant for our purpose, 'reformed' Hinduism as a monolithic construct was seen by many Sikhs as a threat to their own separate identity.

Threat to the separate existence of Sikhism was reinforced by Swami Dayanand. He had no appreciation for any of the existing religious traditions. Though his criticism of the Sikh faith was milder than his condemnation of Christianity, Islam and the Puranic Hindu tradition, it was enough to indicate that the Sikh tradition had no place in his 'reformed' religion. It is true that Swami Dayanand never talked of Hinduism, and he did not like even the use of the term Hindu. But this literal accuracy can lead us astray from his essential position. He stood for one religion for all the people of the country. His trinity of Arya Dharma, Arya Bhasha (that is, Hindi), and Aryavarta was meant to revive the glories of India in all spheres of life. The more militant among the Punjabi Aryas had no hesitation in criticizing the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh scriptures in rather strident terms. Sikhism in their view had outlived its purpose. The Arya programme of shuddhi, a purificatory rite meant to bring into the Arya fold all converts to Christianity and Islam, was logically extended to Sikhs in due course.39 Whereas the Brahmans used to ask the Sikhs to remove their kachh and karā temporarily for ritual purposes, the Aryas were prepared to remove their kesh permanently and deliberately in public. The symbolic significance of this stance was never lost on the Sikhs.

The Singh Sabha founded at Lahore in 1879, two years after the foundation of the Arya Samaj in Lahore itself, proved to be more radical than the Amritsar Singh Sabha. The Lahore leaders were rather militant, like the Aryas, and they contested every inch

of the ground with them. The last two decades of the nineteenth century were marked, among several other controversies, by the Hindu-Sikh controversy over matters religious and social. The issue of identity arose out of this protracted controversy. The Sanatan Dharmi Hindus claimed that Sikhs were Hindu. It was in this context that Bhai Kanh Singh wrote his Ham Hindū Nahīn, responding to what he perceived as a threat to a tradition that he cherished. He was not alone. He represented the views and feelings of an increasing number of Sikhs who prized the Sikh tradition. In this process, two things from the earlier Sikh tradition were brought to the fore and given much greater importance: the $\bar{A}di$ Granth as the exclusive scripture of the Sikhs, and the Khalsa identity as the preferred Sikh identity. Neither the doctrine of Guru Granth nor the Singh identity was new. What was new was the emphasis laid on both. A serious concern for preserving and promoting the Sikh tradition may now appear to be obvious but this dimension has been generally overlooked in explanations which harp on the material interests of a new middle class.

Bhai Kahn Singh raises the question of losses and gains. He refers to the advantages of education and the importance of the material resources of the community. A far more serious concern of Bhai Kahn Singh is the recognition of the Sikh Panth as a political community. To be recognized as a qaum on the basis of their identity was in the best interests of the Sikhs. The Sikh Panth of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a distinct entity. The Khalsa of the eighteenth century was a political community. Therefore, the word panth was synonymous with qaum, that is, a socio-religious community which was also a political community. The Indian Nation consisted of three qaums: Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. Indian 'nationalism' as a common enterprise of all these nationalities should empower all nationalities alike. What was new in Bhai Kahn Singh's book was his view that Sikh identity made the Sikhs a political community. Consequently, 'Sikh' politics were defined as politics based on Sikh identity. This was true of the Chief Khalsa Diwan before and after 1920. This was true of the

Shiromani Akali Dal, and this was true also of the recent militant movement for Khalistan. Bhai Kanh Singh's Ham Hindū Nahīn proved to be a declaration of Sikh nationality.

NOTES

- 1. Kahn Singh, Bhai, Ham Hindū Nahīn (Pbi), Amritsar: Dharam Parchar Committee (SGPC), 1981 (rpt. of the 5th ed). Prefaces to the first and the fifth edition, and pp. 34n1, 39n1, 77n2, 79n1 and 160n1.
- Use of dialogue as a literary device was quite common in the late nineteenth century among all religious communities of the Punjab, perhaps following the example set by Christian missionaries.
- 3. Ibid., pp. 34-7.
- 4. Ibid., pp. 47-51.
- 5. Ibid., pp. 51-5.
- 6. According to Sheena Pall, who has worked on the Sanatan Dharm Movement for her doctoral thesis at the Department of History, Panjab University, Chandigarh, the leaders of the movement consistently took the position that the Sikhs were Hindu.
- 7. Ham Hindū Nāhīn, pp. 58, 59, 59-60, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64.
- 8. Ibid., pp. 69, 77, 78, 769, 81, 82.
- 9. Ibid., pp. 86-87, 87, 97, 100.
- 10. Ibid., pp. 108, 109
- 11. Ibid., p. 132.
- 12. Ibid., pp. 146, 151.
- 13. Ibid., pp. 152, 153, 158.
- 14. Ibid., pp. 55-65.
- 15. Ibid., pp. 65-84.
- 16. Ibid., pp. 85-9.
- 17. Ibid., pp. 89-105.
- 18. Ibid., pp. 105-10.
- 19. Ibid., pp. 110-11.
- 20. Ibid., pp. 111-13.
- 21. Ibid., pp. 114-17.

- 22. Ibid., pp. 118-23.
- 23. Ibid., pp. 123-6.
- 24. Ibid., pp. 138-42.
- 25. Ibid., pp. 142-5.
- 26. Ibid., pp. 143-44n2.
- 27. Ibid., pp. 127-8.
- 28. Ibid., pp. 149-51.
- 29. Ibid., pp. 146-9.
- 30. Ibid., pp. 153-56.
- 31. Ibid., pp. 156-8.
- 32. Ibid., pp. 158-63.
- 33. Ibid., p. 163.
- 34. Ibid., p. 13.
- 35. Ibid., pp. 43n1, 74n2.
- 36. Daljeet Singh, Essentials of Sikhism, Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1994, pp. 255-65.
- 37. W.H. McLeod, Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 7-68.
- 38. Harjot Oberoi, The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 47-71, 137-8.
- 39. Kenneth W. Jones, Arya Dharam: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab, Delhi: Manohar, 1976.

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11

SIKH IDENTITY: CONTEMPORARY VIEWS

Two historians in recent decades have consciously and deliberately discussed the issue of Sikh identity: W.H. McLeod, in Who is a Sikh? and Harjot Oberoi, in his Construction of Religious Boundaries. Another historian, G.S. Dhillon, has strongly criticized their presentation in his reviews of these books and he has written articles on the Singh Sabha Movement and Sikh identity. We propose to take into account these three historians for our own perspective on Sikh identity.

According to McLeod, the Singh Sabha reformers perceived that every thing was not right with the Sikhs and their beliefs and practices. Hinduized ritual was being practised in contemporary Gurdwaras, and the presence of Hindu idols disfigured the Golden Temple. The observance of caste, especially discrimination against outcastes, infringed the clear intentions of the Guru embodied in the institutions of sangat and langar, and the common bowl for initiation. Numerous other such examples could be found in the beliefs and customs of the Sikh elite. In the villages it was often impossible to distinguish a Sikh from a Hindu, and the villagers were not even conscious of differences. They could seek favours at the tombs of Muslims pīrs and worship Sakhi Sarvar and Gugga. Some Sikhs cut their hair and smoked. The solution thought of by the Singh reformers was to purge the Panth of false beliefs and superstitions, whether Hindu or Muslim. 'Sikhs must be summoned to a genuine reaffirmation of their Khalsa loyalty."

The Amritsar Singh Sabha was an elite organization concerned with issues affecting the Sikh Panth. Conspicuous

amongst its founders were titled gentry, affluent landowners, and noted scholars. Particular emphasis was laid on the promotion of periodicals and other appropriate literature. British officers were invited to associate with the Sabha and matters relating to government were excluded from its range of interest. The Singh Sabha movement never lost its elite texture, but the leaders of the Amritsar Sabha were challenged by the Lahore Sabha which attracted intellectuals with a more radical approach to the Panth's problems. They insisted on Khalsa exclusiveness. The Khalsa tradition came to be regarded as 'standard' and Sahajdharis were accepted as 'slow-adopters'. The reformist section of the Singh Sabha movement came to be known as Tat Khalsa (the 'True' or the 'Pure' Khalsa). They were opposed by the Sanatan Khalsa. Each side gave its own interpretation of the Sikh tradition. The Singh Sabha movement is generally equated with the Tat Khalsa in terms of doctrinal formulation, social policy, and historiography. Prominent among the Tat Khalsa reformers were Bhai Kanh Singh of Nabha and Bhai Vir Singh. Closely associated with them was Max Arthur Macauliffe.2

McLeod summarizes the Tat Khalsa understanding of the Sikh tradition in general and the role of the Singh Sabha in particular. He also summarizes the opposing viewpoints put forth by those who identified as Sahajdhari Sikhs and by Punjabi Hindus who were not formally associated with the Panth. The debate was centred on whether or not the Khalsa were Hindu, leaving out the possibility of Sahajdhari identity being treated as 'Sikh'. On both sides the historical past was invoked to defend contemporary perceptions. Their interpretations are 'much too simple to be acceptable'. To claim that the twentieth-century Khalsa was identical with the early eighteenth-century Khalsa was to ignore 'the never-ending sequence of response which any religious group must necessarily make to changing circumstances'. To insist that the Khalsa were Hindu was to ignore their own conviction that they were not Hindu. Furthermore, most Sikhs were not bothered about identity differences except in time of crises. 'A Jat Singh

knows that he is a Sikh and there, for most, the matter ends'. This was not true of Khatrī, Arorā and Ahluwalia castes who were interested in the debate. These were also the castes in which there was the convention of baptizing the elder sons as Khalsa. McLeod tries to clarify the point with reference to amritdhārī and keshdhārī Sikhs: they are not identical but no one doubts the Sikh identity of the keshdhārī. A critical and historical analysis must recognize 'the continuity which extends from the earliest days of the Nanak panth to the end of the nineteenth century and beyond'. However, this would be insufficient by itself. 'The force of intervening circumstances must also be recognized'.

McLeod appreciates Richard Fox for his attempt to understand Khalsa identity as the outcome of an evolving process in which the economic and military policies of the British are seen as necessary ingredients. McLeod looks upon the military policy of the British in its bearing on the Sikhs as 'a significant element' in the debate concerning Sikh identity from 1875 to 1925, but he does not accept Fox's hypothesis that the British chose the Singh identity out of a number of Sikh identities for the army which eventually became the dominant Sikh identity.4 McLeod was prepared to concede 'a variety of identities' in the nineteenth century Sikh Panth, but the claim presented by Fox amounts to a serious exaggeration. To imply that no dominant tradition existed is to ignore the clear evidence of earlier periods. Although the Khalsa was not the sole claimant to the title of Sikh, it was by far the strongest. To reject Fox's hypothesis is not to reject the relevance of changes brought about by the operation of colonial rule in the Punjab. There were elements other than economic and military policy in the large colonial context: new patterns of administration, a new technology, a fresh approach to education, and entry of Christian missionaries. All these elements meshed together to produce a great impact.5

The emergence of the Singh Sabha was an important example of the impact of such elements meshing together and imparted new cultural dimension and magnitude to the movement. Most of

the men who met in Amritsar and Lahrore to form the first Sabhas in 1873 and 1879 came from the Sikh elite who had 'buttressed traditional status with British preferment'. They were reacting to a perceived attack on their inherited traditions, and these traditions were to be defended in whatever ways might seem appropriate. The traditions were derived from their pre-British past, reflecting the earlier acceptance of a dominant Khalsa. The chosen method of defence involved educational influence and use of available technology, and this pattern became increasingly evident as the movement progressed. Remaining loyal to the inherited tradition, the Tat Khalsa reformers began to produce definitions and to shape systems in the light of ideals and modes of thinking acquired from education and Western literature. As a result:

It was Sikh tradition, and specifically a Khalsa tradition, which they developed and glossed. To suggest that they developed a new tradition is false. Equally it is false to claim that their treatment of it can be described as a simple purging of alien excrescence or the restoration of a corrupted original. The Khalsa of the Singh Sabha reformers was both old and new.

The Khalsa ideal was distinguished by a new consistency and a new clarity of definition. The earlier features which were not acceptable were either rejected or suitably modified. Quest for distinctive rituals was initiated, and attempts were made to produce acceptable statements of the rahit. An appropriate version of the Panth's history was formulated, a powerful stress was laid on the doctrine of Guru Granth, and Sikhs were exhorted to observe conventions which would proclaim their separate Khalsa identity. Prominent among these conventions was observance of the Five Ks. A fierce debate developed with the Arya Samaj apologists, with insistent stress on the claim that Sikhs could never be regarded as Hindus. All this time, the pressure of contemporary attitudes operated on the desire to protect traditional loyalties. McLeod illustrates this with reference to Anand marriage. The Tat Khalsa

appropriated the idea and campaigned for the Anand Marriage Act which was passed in 1909.6

Tat Khalsa views gained ascendancy only gradually amongst the intellectual leaders of the Panth but eventually secured dominance within the Singh Sabha. The Amritsar Sabha continued to reflect the Sanatan conservatism of many of its early supporters but the 'philosophical initiative' passed increasingly to the Lahore group. Their strength was 'the strength of ideas and effective communication rather than that of direct political influence'. Though the Chief Khalsa Diwan, founded in 1902 to unite various Singh Sabhas, was dominated by relatively conservative landowners, they were not unwilling to advance 'the progressive cause'. Thus, the more conspicuous and influential contribution in terms of debate and publications came from the Tat Khalsa. Their ideal was to promote reform through education, journalism and preaching.⁷

Sikh identity was the key issue for the Tat Khalsa. The debate was intensified when the widow of Dyal Singh Majithia went to the Chief Court after his death in 1898 to contest his will in favour of the 'trust' he had founded. Two pamphlets entitled Sikh Hindū Hain were published and Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha presented the opposite viewpoint in his Ham Hindū Nahīn, published in 1898. He also made an attempt to produce a coherent statement of the rahit in his Gurmat Sudhākar in 1901. This was one of several such attempts which culminated in the publication of the Gurmat Prakāsh Bhāg Sanskār in 1915. Though implicitly Khalsa in content, this manual did not exclude the Sahajdharis altogether from its scope. Two major claims of the Tat Khalsa can be seen as gaining general acceptance: one, that Sikhs are not Hindu and the other, that a true Sikh will normally be a Khalsa. This interpretation stopped short of any claim to exclusive possession of the entire Panth.8

The British administrators who were charged with framing laws had to face the question of Sikh identity. In 1891, census enumerators were instructed to return as Sikhs all those persons who kept their hair uncut and abstained from smoking. Thus, the

Keshdharis alone were to be treated as Sikhs. The Sahajdharis could return themselves as Nanak Panthis, or as followers of other Sikh Gurus. But in 1911 it was decided to enter as a Sikh every person who claimed to be one. No change was made in 1921.

The elected members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee were required to wear the Five Ks. In the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925, the Sikh was defined as a person who professed the Sikh religion. At the same time, if any doubt arose the following declaration was required: 'I solemnly affirm that I believe in the Guru Granth Sahib, that I believe in the Ten Gurus and that I have no other religion'. This does not necessarily exclude the Sahajdharis. The task of redefining the rahit devolved on the SGPC after the Act of 1925. Its Sikh Rahit Maryādā was published eventually in 1950. In it the Sikh was defined as a person 'who believes in Akal Purakh; in the ten Gurus, and their teachings; in the Khalsa initiation ceremony instituted by the tenth Guru; and who does not believe in any other system of religious doctrine'. This definition implies preference for the Amritdhari, includes the Keshdhari, and does not exclude the Sahajdhari. In the Delhi Gurdwara Act of 1971, the Keshdhari Sikh was included but not the Sahajdhari.9

McLeod turns specifically to the question 'who is a Sikh?' in the last chapter of his book. One essential feature was the doctrine of the divine Name. The practice of nām simran was the assured means of liberation from the cycle of transmigration. No organization or individual could be treated as holding authority comparable with that of the Sikh scripture, neither the SGPC, nor the corporate community as Guru-Panth. The second feature relevant for Sikh identity was also related to the authority of the Granth Sahib. Its sanctity made the Gurdwara all the more a sanctified institution in which the egalitarian principles of the Panth were most effectively applied through the impartial distribution of karhā parshād, the convention of the langar, and the traditional concept of service in addition of congregational worship.

Veneration for the Gurus, as embodied in the Sikh prayer (ardās), could be added as the third feature of Sikh identity. 10

McLeod rejects the idea that Sikhs could be regarded as a distinct and separate race. The term 'nation' was used rather loosely for the Sikhs by the British. It began to attract serious attention only when the Muslim League's claim to nationhood crystallized and produced the threat of partition. For many Sikhs, 'nation' is simply the equivalent of qaum, but it is 'a thoroughly misguided' equation. The word qaum does suggest a strong sense of corporate identity but its meaning is not the same as that of the word 'nation'. Nevertheless there were Sikhs who used 'nation' in its English connotation with reference to the Sikhs. Therefore, the debate whether of not the Sikhs constitute a separate nation was likely to continue for quite some time. Since the idea of distinct identity takes for granted the concept of 'nation', it does not carry us forward towards a better understanding of identity itself."

In theory, women are regarded as equals of men in the Panth, but their actual status falls short of the theoretical claim. Their right to participate in the Panth's rituals is generally recognized even to the extent of permitting them to sit in attendance on the Guru Granth Sahib and read from the sacred scripture in public worship. Sikhs commonly claim that their women enjoy a much greater freedom than those who belong to other areas of Indian society. This is a plausible claim and deserves to be examined. However, with the exception of a small elite of educated urban women, the place of women in the Panth is clearly subordinate to that of males. Focus is normally fixed on male identity and effective authority is exercised generally by men. It is nonetheless important that there is clear doctrinal support for equal rights within the Panth. Caste too presents an apparent conflict between doctrine, or theory, and actual practice. Willingness to eat together is general but caste is still generally observed in familial relationship and marriage alliances. Exceptions can be found but they remain exceptions. Whereas caste has been largely destroyed in ritual terms, it continues to exercise a fundamental influence on social

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and political life of the Panth. Whereas the doctrine clearly condemns caste, a substantial majority of Sikhs observe certain significant features of caste in practice.¹²

Three Sikh identities could be observed on the ground: the amritdhārī, the keshdhārī and the sahajdhārī. Little distinction was drawn between the first two. They who retained their hair uncut and refrained from smoking were accepted as Sikhs if they claimed the identity, and for all practical purposes they were regarded as 'Sikhs of the Khalsa'. The beard and the tobacco are the two standard tests. The idea that it is possible to be a Sikh without being a Khalsa had only negligible support among the Sikhs. The idea that a window might be left open for those who reverence the Guru Granth Sahib without accepting the rahit attracted little enthusiasm. A substantial majority of the Sikhs either rejected sahajdhārī identity of the Sikhs, and sahajdhārī identity appeared to have lapsed. Khalsa attitudes towards sectarian movements were 'ambivalent'. The majority would concede that the Namdharis and the original Nirankaris are Sikhs. A similar verdict is grudgingly conceded for the followers of Yogi Harbhajan Singh Khalsa. The Radhasoamis remain distinctly marginal, and adherents of the Sant Nirankari Mandal are vehemently excluded from the category of Sikhs.13

McLeod sums up the distinctive identity of the Sikhs in terms of reverence for the ten Gurus, the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors concerning liberation through the divine Name, the practice of nām simran, veneration for the scripture itself, acknowledgement of the sanctity of the Gurdwara conferred on it by the scripture, and recognition of the role of the Gurdwara in expressing the anti-caste ideals of the Gurus. To these items are added others from the legacy of Guru Gobind Singh: initiation into the Khalsa and observance of the rahit, including the Five Ks, and belief in the end of personal Guruship at the death of Guru Gobind Singh. Thereafter the authority of the Guru was vested in the Ādi Granth and the corporate community or the Guru Panth. Those who decline to accept the basic requirements of the rahit

can still be accepted as Sikhs but only on the understanding that they are failing to discharge customary duties. Sikh history and tradition are regarded as a continuing source of guidance and inspiration. Denial of caste is one of the basic principles but those who observe caste practices are not deprived of their right to be regarded as Sikh. Women enjoy a status theoretically equal to that of male Sikhs. Though most Sikhs are Punjabis, the Panth is open to any who accept its doctrines and practices.¹⁴

11

Harjot Oberoi talks of Sanatan Sikhism as the 'great tradition' before the Tat Khalsa became influential enough to dislodge it and to replace it with their own version of Sikhism.

To indicate the character of Sanatan Sikhism, he tells us that Gulab Singh referred to the Sikh faith as 'the true Sanatan religion' in a public lecture at Guru Ka Bagh in Amritsar, and looked upon the four Vedas as religious books of the Sikhs among others. Giani Gian Singh backed his statement of gurmaryādā with 'extensive proofs from the Vedas'. Avtar Singh Vahiria debated doctrinal issues with reference to Gurbilas, the Vedas, the Purāņas, and the Epics. He counted Guru Nanak among a long line of avtārs who were born out of Brahma and were again united with Brahma after their earthly mission. He expected a Sikh to show the same allegiance to the descendant of a Guru as to the ruler. In his view. any person who accepted the teaching of Guru Nanak qualified to be a Sikh. The Sahajdharis were a part of the Panth. Avtar Singh Vahiria subscribed to the Brahmanical paradigm of varnashrama dharma. The 'untouchable groups' among the Sikhs were to be regarded as agents of 'pollution'. They were barred entry into the major Sikh shrines. The acceptance of the theory of varnashama dharma gave 'a logical place' to the Udasis within the ambit of Sikh tradition, legitimizing asceticism. Images were allowed to be worshipped within the precincts of the Golden Temple.

The Sodhis of Anandpur received the obeisance of the people and accepted offerings from them at the time of the Holi festival.

The Sodhis of Har Sahai had in their possession a pothī and a māla, believed to have come down from Guru Nanak, which attracted people to the place at the time of the Baisakhi fair every year to pay homage to the sacred relics. The Sodhis of Kartarpur had in their possession a pothī, (believed to be the Granth prepared by Guru Arjan) which was revered by princes as well as the common people. Other representatives of the Guru lineages established guru-sikh relationship with a large number of clients. Pandit Tara Singh Narotam, the most eminent Nirmala scholar, developed an elaborate theological system of Sanatan Sikhism in his Gurmat Nirnay Sāgar, published in 1878. Giani Gian Singh received his formal training and instruction from Pandit Tara Singh Narotam. Sant Atar Singh was educated at a Nirmala establishment. Atma Singh, a Nirmala scholar of Amritsar, was associated with Ernest Trumpp in his project of translating the Ādi Granth. 16

In Oberoi's view, the popular form of religious expression 'worked out a comfortable relationship' with Sanatan Sikhism. The objects of worship in popular religion were Sakhi Sarvar, Gugga, the devī under many different names, especially Sitala, the sainted dead, Khwaja Khizr, village godlings, the sun, the earth and sacred trees. There was belief in evil spirits, witchcraft, sorcery and magical healing, involving a number of practices based on that belief. The intermediaries in popular religion, like its objects of worship, were also different, consisting of pīrs, bharāīs mirāsīs, ojhās and siānās. The festivals like Baisakhi, Diwali and Holi were celebrated by Sikhs as much as by others. There were monthly festivals timed according to the different phases of the moon, like pūranmāshī and sangrānd. A closely related theme was that of fairs (melās) held in honour of persons as well as gods and goddesses. Belief in astrology and divination was quite common.¹⁷

Oberoi takes notice of some cases of disapproval of popular practices but only to suggest that they arose from a Sanatanist position. The author of the *Gurbilās Chhevīn Pātshāhī*, written in the early nineteenth century, tells his readers that they should not visit non-Sikh places because heaven can be attained by bathing

at Sikh religious centres, and that those who were afraid of the messengers of death should seek to breath their last at the Golden Temple. Reading from the Sikh scriptures as well as pilgrimage to Sikh shrines could lead to fulfillment of wishes for male progeny, cure against fevers, and the like. The idea was to discourage Sikhs from going with such expectations to non-Sikh places or persons. The author of the Sau Sākhī tells the readers not to worship Sitala Devi to seek cure from small pox, not to partake of offering made to her, and not to participate in the practice associated with the cult of Sakhi Sarvar. The supposed ends of magic and witchcraft can be attained by relying on Sikh sacred scriptures, especially when combined with hom. Baba Dayal, the founder of the Nirankari movement, insisted on constant reading of Sikh sacred texts and remembrance of the divine name in a manner that carried implicit disapproval of the magical universe of popular religion. The Namdharis or Kukas were aggressively explicit on the point: they started desecrating, demolishing and destroying village shrines and sacred ancestral sites in the countryside. They also destroyed some tombs and places sacred to Hanuman and Lakshman. But even the Kukas, like the other critics of popular religion, betrayed the impact of Sanatan modes of thought in suggesting alternatives. 18

There were differences between popular religion and the Sanatan tradition. Whereas the Sanatan categories of thought and behaviour were influenced by texts, both Sikh and non-Sikh, popular religion was independent of texts of any kind. The Sanatan tradition was mainly an urban phenomenon and popular religion belonged to the countryside. Despite such dissimilarities, these two forms of religious expression seem to have worked out a comfortable relationship. The examples given by Oberoi come from the area of goddess worship and relate to the Sikh rulers of Lahore, Kapurthala and Patiala. ¹⁹

British administrators were keen to introduce social reform. The practice of female infanticide was successfully eliminated by the 1870s. They encouraged the Punjabis to undertake reform through associations of their own. The Raj and the Church

advanced side by side in the Punjab, and this 'evangelical entente' appeared to present a grave threat. The Christian missionaries employed a two-pronged strategy to propagate the gospel effectively: publishing evangelical literature in the vernacular and opening mission schools.²⁰

In a general atmosphere of reform the immediate occasion for founding the Singh Sabha at Amritsar was provided by the declared intention of a few Sikh students of a Christian mission school to convert to Christianity. A Sikh aristocrat and a Sikh giānī convened a meeting of leading public figures and traditional intellectuals among the Sikhs. The most prominent among them were Baba Khem Singh Bedi, Kanwar Bikrama Singh and Giani Hazara Singh. They decided to institute the Sri Guru Singh Sabha as a democratic institution, with elected office-bearers. But it remained in the control of a small group of men who were supported by several giānīs and bhāīs. Prominent among the intellectuals of the Sabha were Giani Hazara Singh and Avtar Singh Vahiria. The first publication sponsored by the Sabha, Srī Gurpurab Prakāsh, published in 1885, narrated the biographies of the Sikh Gurus and listed the day, month and year of birth and death for each of them. In response to Trumpp's Adi Granth. Giani Badan Singh prepared an exegesis of the Adi Granth in Gurmukhi under the patronage of the rulers of Faridkot.²¹

The ideas and attitudes of the leaders of the Amritsar Singh Sabha were reflected in its monthly magazine SrI Gurmat $Prak\bar{a}shak$. All those who believed in the sanctity of the Sikh Gurus and the $\bar{A}di$ Granth were Sikh. The Sahajdharis were qualified to be Sikh as much as the Khalsa and the term mona was appropriate only for a Sikh who cut his hair after taking pahul. The low caste Sikhs did not have the same religious rights as the high caste Sikhs. Sikh men should neither dye their beards nor roll them into a thick bun. Recitation of hymns not found in the $\bar{A}di$ Granth was to be discontinued. The leaders of the Amritsar Sabha were poorly equipped to face the rapidly changing cultural milieu. Radical

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change was not on their agenda because they were rooted in the Sanatan Sikh tradition.²²

The pluralistic attitude, with its inbuilt tolerance, enabled the Sanatanists to face such phenomena as dissent, social inversions and even the total abandonment of community norms via renunciation, with great ease and grace. By legitimizing 'deviation' the Sanatanists 'not only ensured the vitality of the Panth but also significantly reduced the possibilities of conflicts with other religious communities'. As a result of not belonging to a monolithic Panth, individual Sikhs enjoyed wide religious freedoms. They had a vast terrain from which to choose their rites, rituals and beliefs. 'This is reflected, for instance, in the fact that if a Sikh so desired, he or she could in the same year go to a khānaqah of a Muslim pir like Sakhi Sarvar in Western Punjab, undertake a pilgrimage to the Golden Temple in Central Punjab, and visit Hardwar to take a dip in the holy Ganges'. This sort of ritual exercise caused no ripples within 'the Sikh sacred hierarchy'. There was little homogeneity in the social field created or supported by Sanatan Sikh tradition; there was a place for all individuals, types, personalities, categories, groups and traditions. Recreation, fun, amusement and joking were an integral part of the myths, stories, and ritual practices of Sanatan Sikh tradition. This ludic element provided a rich resource of creativity. As a result 'religion' was not a dreary repetition but rather lively and invigorating. 'It was able to constantly renew and change itself'. This 'carnivalesque Sanatan tradition' exemplified the strength and richness as well as the actual state of the nineteenth century Sikh religious tradition.23

The Singh Sabha at Lahore was founded in 1879. More than a score of other Sabhas were founded in the five years following, and by the end of the nineteenth century there were more than a hundred Singh Sabhas. Simultaneously with the proliferation of Singh Sabhas emerged a new kind of leadership. Oberoi refers to this leadership as the new elites. They were new not in terms of their social origins so much as in their functions and in the

instruments of transmission they appropriated. They exercised domination through anglo-vernacular education and print culture. They evolved a 'sub-culture' for wider dissemination through a process which Oberoi calls 'dialogic'. They were engaged in exploring and constructing avenues to come to terms with the altered historical situation.²⁴

The initial impetus for the Lahore Singh Sabha came from two teachers, Gurmukh Singh and Bhai Harsa Singh. Barely a year after the Sabha's inception, Gurmukh Singh started publishing a weekly in Punjabi, the *Gurmukhī Akhbār*, with Bhai Harsa Singh as co-editor. The Khalsa Press was opened at Lahore in 1883. An Urdu weekly of the Sabha, the *Khālsā Akhbār*, was started in 1886 when the monthly *Sudhārak* was also launched. The other prominent leaders of the Lahore Sabha were Bhai Jawahar Singh Kapur, Giani Ditt Singh and Sardar Attar Singh of Bhadaur. To coordinate the activities of the increasing number of Sabhas, a Khalsa Diwan was set up at Lahore in 1886. However, the success of the Singh Sabhas was not due so much to their 'organizational structure' as the 'immense seduction' their discourse held for 'a restless and upwardly mobile Sikh elite.²⁵

In the Tat Khalsa view of the world the Granth was the rightful heir of the ten Sikh Gurus and it took precedence over all other sacred texts: the Vedas, the Gītā, the Purāṇas and even the Dasam Granth which enshrined the 'great code' of the Sanatanists. Gradually eased out of rituals, it no longer enjoyed textual hegemony by the early twentieth century. Belief in the role of avtārs and conceptions of the divine in feminine terms were no longer permissible. 'The ten Gurus and the Granth became the centre of the Tat Khalsa universe'. In the early 1880s the Tat Khalsa began earnestly to reconstitute sacred space by initiating three measures: a campaign against certain seasonal fairs held within the precincts of Sikh shrines; the removal of non-Sikh icons from the Sikh sacred centres; and a strident call for the reform of temple management. In 1905, icons stood legally removed from the Golden Temple. Oberoi thinks that running the

major temples 'had always been the prerogative of the rulers and not the ruled'. The Tat Khalsa would wage an all-out battle to push out what they saw as a corrupt and irresponsible religious establishment simply because it was Sanatan. Furthermore, there was no space for special ritual intermediaries in Sikh theology, and the Tat Khalsa took great pains to confirm that 'all Sikhs had a right over the community's sacred resources'. By directing all sacred resources into Sikh temples the Tat Khalsa made the Gurdwaras 'Sikh corporate symbols par excellence'.26

The Tat Khalsa changed the equilibrium between Khalsa and non-Khalsa appearance by rigidly enforcing external symbols and codifying life-cycle rituals, consolidating the Rahitnama tradition. The sanctity of the kesh was brought into high relief in narratives of martyrdom. Repeated emphasis on khande kI pahul in Tat Khalsa literature succeed in turning baptism into the most salient of the Sikh rites de passage. A large number of manuals were published between 1884 and 1915 on how the life-cycle rituals were to be performed. All Sikhs were required to perform the same rituals without any reference to their caste or birādarI tradition. Changes introduced by a small minority gradually came to be accepted by the Sikh public at large. The passage of the Anand Marriage Act in 1909 boosted the Tat Khalsa position on rites de passage. In Oberoi's view, 1909 can be seen as a watershed in the history of 'modern Sikhism'. Additional 'innovations' were made in dress, language, the annual calendar and dietary taboos to prove 'a distinctive symbolic universe' for Sikhs. To the evolving inventory of 'separatist symbols' were added the Gurmukhi script and the Punjabi language as exclusive emblems of Sikh identity, with perhaps the most far-reaching implication.²⁷

The norms of the Tat Khalsa discourse were radically opposed to the prevailing Sanatan tradition and popular religion. The widespread practice of worshipping popular saints like Sakhi Sarvar and Gugga Pir came under attack. In fact all forms of popular worship became the target of hostile polemic. Village gods, local shrines, ancestral spirits, holy nature-spots, and devīs like

the smallpox goddess Sitala were ridiculed and proclaimed to be powerless. Similarly, attendance at seasonal fairs, listening to folk songs, the singing of bawdy songs by women at the time of wedding were censured by the Tat Khalsa. Their intolerance was matched by their disdain for customary forms of family entertainment: song, dance and music. Fasting was viewed with great hostility, particularly by men. Sikh participation in the festivals of LohrI, Holi, Dasehra and Diwali was denounced as mark of Hindu domination over Sikhs.²⁸

The increasing influence of the Tat Khalsa was felt by the Sanatanists. Baba Khem Singh Bedi, as President of the Amritsar Khalsa Diwan, proposed that all Singh Sabhas in future should be called 'Sikh Singh Sabhas'. This could attract the Sahajdharis, the Nirmalas and the Udasis as well as the Khalsa. But he had to drop the motion at the annual meeting of the Diwan in 1884 because of bitter opposition from its radical members. In 1885, they raised objection to the use of a cushion (gadelā) by Khem Singh Bedi in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. This resulted in a split in the Khalsa Diwan.

A persistent advocate of Sanatan Sikhism was Avtar Singh Vahiria who publicized his view that Sikhs could worship Durga without inhibition. A couple to be married must circumambulate a fire, which amounted to rejecting the Anand ceremonial. In his view, Anand marriage was an innovation of the Nirankaris; there was no evidence that the Sikh Gurus ever performed their marriage rituals according to the Anand procedures. He also supported the right of a bereaved family to take unburnt bones for immersion in the Ganges. In his view, the Khalsa initiation rite was not obligatory. Each tradition within the ambit of Sikh experience could have its own initiatory rite. The Sanatan Sikh became the natural allies of personal working in shrines and other sacred establishments. 'In their turn, the support staff at Sikh gurdwaras was closely aligned to Sanatan ideology'.²⁹

In order to broadcast their ideology, the Sanatan Sikhs began to make increasing use of print culture. They appropriated the

Gurmukhi Akhbār, a major weekly of the Lahore Singh Sabha. Avtar Singh Vahiria began to edit and publish the Srī Gurmat Prakāshak in 1885. This Punjabi journal could be used to discredit the Lahore Singh Sabha and its leaders. They were presented as looking upon Srī Guru Granth Sahib as merely a book and considering the worship of Sikh Gurdwaras a form of idol worship. They had no respect for Sikh takhts and the hukamnāmas issued from them. This was not all. The Sanatan leadership barred radical Sikh activists from the major Sikh shrines. Gurmukh Singh, their foremost leader, was prevented from addressing a Sikh congregation at Manji Sahib, close to the Golden Temple, by the steward of the Golden Temple 'accompanied by a police sergeant'. Two decades later, in 1907, Babu Teja Singh, received a similar treatment at Damdama Sahib. The Sanatan management of this shrine issued a proclamation against all members of 'the Singh Sabhas' and in favour of Nirmalas and 'the guru lineages'.30

Authoritative hukamnāmas in behalf of the Sanatan Sikhs were matched by direct action against the radicals. In 1885, when the move to expel Gurmukh Singh from the Khalsa Diwan was frustrated, he was threatened with physical violence and forced into hiding at Jalandhar. In 1887, he was excommunicated by a hukamnāma issued by Man Singh, the manager of the Golden Temple, at the instigation of Baba Khem Singh Bedi and Raja Bikram Singh. Bawa Udey Singh, nephew of Baba Khem Singh Bedi, filed a defamation suit against Ditt Singh, a prominent leader of the Lahore Singh Sabha who edited the Khālsā Akhbār. Fined by the lower court, Ditt Singh was acquitted in an appeal, but the Khālsā Akhbār had to be stopped eventually in 1889.

Baba Khem Singh Bedi and Raja Bikram Singh tried to revive the rump Khalsa Diwan in 1886, and Bawa Udey Singh presided over a new Sabha called Nanak Panth Prakash. The basic strength of 'Sanatan' values came from 'Sikh personnel at the major Sikh shrines and sacred establishments'. Khem Singh Bedi was the first to declare that Sikhs were Hindu, thus entering the controversy against the radical Sikhs. He was joined by the rulers

of Faridkot and Patiala. For Avtar Singh Vahiria, Sikhism was like a wing within a large inn called Hinduism: 'It shared the same foundation and courtyard but had its own separate rooms and terraces'.³¹

According to Oberoi, the non-elite consisting of the peasantry, agricultural labour and artisans in both rural and urban areas often defied the norms sought to be established by the Tat Khalsa. Their hostility towards the Singh Sabhas was expressed through folk sayings, participation in rituals denounced by the radicals, and in festive cycles like Holi and Diwali. In contemporary sources, this opposition appears to be 'erratic, diffuse and piecemeal' because of the received notions of 'what constitutes resistance'. We should look for it not merely in the field of politics but also in its everyday manifestations to become aware of 'how dominant cultural definitions are breached'.³²

The Tat Khalsa triumphed in spite of all opposition from the Sanatanists and the peasantry. The situation created by the colonial rule in the Punjab was favourable in some ways to the Tat-Khalsa. Customary social relationship were replaced by market relationship, and the sepīdārī system became a victim of this change. For example, the new means of communications made the customary services of the $n\bar{a}\bar{i}s$ easily dispensable. The British army authorities appreciated the Khalsa identity and insisted upon its continuance for the Sikhs who joined the army. The British civilians tended to equate the Sikhs with the Khalsa. Furthermore, they thought in term of monolithic religious communities, obliging the Sikhs to accept the monolithic construct. This identity could be invoked to keep 'others' out of competition for jobs. The expansion of local self-government created another arena for competition. All such factors enabled the Tat Khalsa to muster support from a much larger number of Sikhs than the 'Sanatan' Sikhs could. In any case, the colonial state and its institutions played a significant role in the emergence of a homogeneous Sikh religion.33

Oberoi does not deny the relevance of the Khalsa tradition of the eighteenth century for the emergence of 'medern Sikhism',

but he attaches much greater importance to the new factors like the colonial state and its institutions. The need of a new set of ideas and institutions to meet the challenge posed by political, economic and cultural changes brought about by the operation of colonial rule was even more important. The 'new elites' created a 'sub-culture' through a process in which new readings of the \bar{A} di Granth, the Janamsākhīs and the Gurbilās literature were combined with an indigenous understanding of Western philosophy and social thought. Finally, the emergence of the corporate Sikh identity was facilitated through a dialectical process begun by similar 'transformations in imagination, experience and cultural organization' among Hindus and Muslims. 34

Oberoi underlines the rupture brought about by the Tat Khalsa in rhetorical terms:

For over three hundred years the chequered history of the Sikh movement had not generated an all-embracing definition of a Sikh. The Tat Khalsa, through a series of innovations, purges and negations, supplied this definition in less than three decades. They endowed Sikhs with their own texts, histories, symbols, festivities, ritual calendar, sacred space, life-cycle rituals, in short a meaningful universe, separate and radically different from other religious traditions. Sikhs could now confidently lay claim to being an exclusive panlocal religious community.³⁵

A clue to this hyperbolic statement lies partly in Oberoi's conception to religious identity. For him, religious identity does not imply 'merely the formal beliefs that distinguish a group of people' and which may lead them to conceive of themselves 'as distinct from the rest of the population'. Equally important is the historical process by which 'a cohesive community of believers comes to be produced, consolidated and reproduced through a cultural fusion of texts, myths, symbols and rituals with human bodies and sentiments'. He goes on to add that texts, myths, symbols and rituals have to be considered together, and not just

one or another in isolation, to avoid 'questionable conclusions'.36

The concepts of 'episteme' and 'praxis' are relevant for Oberoi's conception of 'rupture'. Routine intentional activity is derived from an 'episteme' which has a dialectical relationship with practice, so much so that one cannot exist without the other. Changes in social, cultural and economic context can lead to a situation of praxis, potentially carrying the possibility of a historical rupture. Such a rupture was brought about by the Tat Khalsa, and 'modern Sikhism' stands clearly distinguished not only from the Sanatan tradition but also from the earlier Sikh tradition, including the Khalsa.³⁷

III

Both W.H. McLeod and Harjot Oberoi have been criticized by G.S. Dhillon whose doctoral thesis on the Singh Sabha Movement remains unpublished but who has written articles on both the Singh Sabha and Sikh identity. In a review of McLeod's Who is a Sikh? The problem of Sikh Identity, Dhillon points out that McLeod minimizes the role played by Guru Nanak as the founder of Sikhism. He looks upon Sikh doctrines and distinctive features as the product of historical factors and the evolving tradition associated with the later Gurus who are presented as drifting away from the teachings of Guru Nanak. McLeod looks upon Guru Nanak's religion as a religion of 'interiority' founded on the so-called Sant Tradition which in any case was other worldly with no thought of social responsibility. With a positive outlook on life Guru Nanak rejected renunciation and founded a new faith for the house holders. The social character of Sikhism was reflected in the institution of dharmsāla with its congregational worship and community kitchen. The world was no 'illusion' for Guru Nanak; the movement he initiated represented an activistic approach to the problems of life. He laid the foundation of 'a grand catholic religion with universal brotherhood as one of it distinctive features'. The general terms of Guru Nanak's message are embodied in the Guru Granth.38

For the colonial period, Dhillon wrongly states that McLeod

subscribes to the view that the Khalsa identity was promoted by the British in order to serve their vested interest and, therefore, Sikh identity for McLeod was a creation of the British. However, Dhillon is right in pointing out that it did not suit the British to promote Sikh identity. In fact they supported Mahants and Pujaris consistently and, eventually, set the stage for an intensive conflict in the form of the Gurdwara Reform Movement. ³⁹ Dhillon's review of Who is a Sikh? is more in the nature of a judgment on McLeod as a historian, saying very little about Sikh identity.

Dhillon's review of Harjot Oberoi's Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition is more relevant for Sikh identity. Oberoi's assertion that communal boundaries in India crystallized only in the nineteenth century was totally baseless. 40 Dhillon reiterates his understanding of the early Sikh movement in support of his rhetorical statement that 'Sikh history is nothing but an expression of Sikh ideology'. More to the point is his statement that gods and goddesses and what Oberoi calls popular religion were rejected by the Gurus. The Singh Sabha leaders said nothing new on this issue. Even more important is Dhillon's reference to H.A. Rose who is Oberoi's main source and who clearly states that the Sikhs looked upon the worshippers of Sakhi Sarvar as their traditional enemies. Furthermore, Oberoi is wrong in asserting that the colonial rule and its institutions played a crucial role in the emergence of a homogenous Sikh religion. Dhillon wrongly assumes that Oberoi is talking of British policy but rightly points out that the British tried to undermine Sikh identity. The Darbar Sahib and all the major Gurdwaras were controlled by Mahants and Pujaris under state patronage. As the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, R.E. Egerton, wrote to the Governor General, Lord Ripon, in 1881, the management of Gurdwaras in the hands of a committee without government control was regarded as politically dangerous. It was only after a prolonged struggle that the Gurdwaras were liberated in 1925. Ernest Trumpp, a missionary commissioned by the colonial government to translate the \bar{A} di Granth, gave a distorted version of Sikh ideology. The administrators who gave an authentic and honest account of Sikh history and Sikh religion, like J.D. Cunningham and M.A. Macauliffe, were punished and disgraced. Dhillon oversimplifies their position, but it remains true that both these writers underscored the originality of Sikhism and the distinctiveness of Sikh identity. Finally, Dhillon point out that the so-called representatives of Sanatan Sikhism represented a actually a minority view. More than the reviews, the articles by G.S. Dhillon on the Singh Sabha Movement and Sikh identity clarify his position with regard to Harjot Oberoi.

The Singh Sabha Movement, for Dhillon was not a 'reformist movement'. In order to determine its character we should consider four points: (a) ideology of the Sikh movement, (b) the level of its achievement in practice, (c) 'fall' if any, and (d) the changes brought about by the leaders of the Singh Sabha Movement. The first two relate to the ideas, attitudes and institutions of the Sikh Gurus and their followers till the establishment of Sikh rule. The third relates to the period of the Sikh and early British rule in the Punjab. The fourth relates, obviously to the Singh Sabha Movement itself.⁴²

Dhillon argues that an entirely new ideology was put forth by Guru Nanak and his successors and it remained operative till the establishment of Sikh rule in the late eighteenth century. The establishment of the Khalsa Commonwealth gave opportunity to Muslim and Hindu population of the Punjab to seek conversion to Sikhism for mundane reasons. The ten or eleven lacs of Sikhs estimated to have been living in the kingdom of Ranjit Singh were not simply the descendants of the Khalsa of the eighteenth century. Most of them were new converts to Sikhism, and they were slow to shed some of their old beliefs and prejudices at personal, familial and social levels, including faith in local gods and goddesses, and in pIrs and faqIrs. The loss of political power finally in 1849 had a demoralizing effect. Sikh giānIs turned to Hindus for the employment of their talents, and started teaching their religious books. A Hindu tint was given to Sikh doctrines. Sikh thought

began to decline. Some Sikhs felt attracted to other religions, notably Christianity. Dhillon's hunch is that more than 70 per cent of the Sikhs in the 1870s belonged to the segment which had not shed their Hindu prejudices.⁴⁴

An important factor in this situation was the activity of some of the descendants of the Sikh Gurus who had been lavishly patronized by the Sikh rulers earlier. They started the cult of 'personal worship' to collect offerings. It was in their interest to encourage both Sikhs and Hindus to become their followers. Their proteges started propagating that the Gurus had preached the religious system of the Vedas. Notable among them were Avtar Singh Vahiria and Gulab Singh. Nevertheless, even in this situation there were Sikhs who observed the rahit of the Khalsa, and the Nirankaris adhered to the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib as their sole scripture.⁴⁵

The Singh Sabhas made the Sikhs aware of their great spiritual and cultural heritage. By emphasizing the importance of Khalsa practices, social laws, customs and the Punjabi language, the Singh Sabha leaders welded the Sikhs once again into an independent community, bound together by faith in the teaching of their Gurus. The key note of the Singh Sabha was 'back to Guru Granth Sahib'. Their object was to restore the purity of Sikhism by discarding all those practices which did not stand the test of Sikh maryādā or the teachings of the Gurus. The Singh Sabha made no innovations in Sikh thought and practices. Its objective was 'revival' of the true Sikh tradition for socio-religious regeneration of the Sikh community. For this purpose it was necessary to devise a suitable strategy and to choose effective means. The new steps taken by the Singh Sabha leaders related to education on modern lines and publication and propagation of religious literature.46

According to Dhillon, Oberoi is selective in his presentation of Sikhism in the late nineteenth century and he is guilty of projecting this partial representation 'to be the integral part of earlier or original Sikhism'. This observation covers both Sanatan

Sikhism and popular religion. Oberoi is wrong in stating that 'deviance' came to be criticized for the first time in the late nineteenth century. The *Guru Granth* is full of hymns rejecting the spiritual character of gods and goddesses. Oberoi treats the leaders of the Lahore Singh Sabha as 'elites', but they came from humble social background. Dhillon misses the connotation of 'elites' in Oberoi's work. Nevertheless, if the Lahore leaders succeeded against the leaders of the Amritsar Singh Sabha, who were politically and economically much more powerful, their success demanded explanation.

Oberoi has relied mainly on the works of Avtar Singh Vahiria and Gulab Singh, who were proteges of men like Baba Khem Singh Bedi. Their evidence does not justify the assertion that Sanatan Sikhs represented the dominant form of Sikhism in the late nineteenth century. Oberoi makes the mistake of equating the ideas and attitudes of a self-interested and affluent but a small group with the nineteenth-century Sikh tradition. Seen in the light of the early Sikh tradition and the norms of Sikh tradition embodied in the sacred scripture, the so-called Sanatanism was infact a 'deviation'.⁴⁷

About Oberoi's presentation of popular religion, Dhillon's first objection is that the Sikh worshippers of Sakhi Sarvar were no more than 3%. The worship of Gugga, Sitala and 'ancestors' was less popular than that of Sakhi Sarvar even according to Oberoi. The space devoted by Oberoi to popular religion is out of all proportion to its prevalence among the Sikhs. He is wrong in stating that criticism of popular religion began only in the late nineteenth century. Ratan Singh Bhangu makes an explicit statement in the early nineteenth century that the Sikhs did not believe in Sakhi Sarvar and Gugga and they were opposed to the 'Sultanis', the worshippers of Sakhi Sarvar. Oberoi omits to mention Rose's observation that 'comparatively few Sikhs are followers of Sarvar'. The Sultanis were generally regarded as Hindus. In the Khālsā Akhbār used by Oberoi as his evidence, all the people of the Punjab, and not merely Sikhs, are advised to

give up the worship of Sitala as goddess of small-pox and to get themselves inoculated. Oberoi's statement that Sikhism is first and foremost a peasant faith is baseless in view of the Sikh scriptures. Popular religion was there among the Sikhs in spite of the teaching of Sikhism. It was a measure of the success of the Sikh faith that popular religion was less popular among the Sikhs. In any case, its presence among the Sikhs did not make it 'Sikh' in any sense of the term. Many pagan customs continued in Christianity in one form or another for centuries on end, but they are not regarded as a part of Christianity. For the same reason, folktales could not be regarded as a part of Sikhism.⁴⁸

In his article on Sikh identity, Dhillon points out that Oberoi 'neither defines Sikhism nor clarifies how a deviant practice forms the faith of a pluralistic group'. Using the term 'tradition' rather loosely, and making no distinction between the written and the oral, he makes no reference to the Guru Granth. He fails so see that the basic principles of Sikhism were defined by Guru Nanak who laid the foundation of its social structure. Multiple loyalties and plurality of beliefs were out of question in Sikhism. Whether a Sikh or a Khalsa, one had to have 'unalloyed loyalty to the Scripture'. On this criterion several of the groups could not be regarded as 'lying within the framework of the Sikh faith'. Furthermore, participation in fairs and festivals not 'incongruous with the doctrines of the Guru' was not barred. Oberoi's talk of 'multiple identities' and competing definitions springs from his failure to appreciate the criteria of exclusion and inclusion. His assumption that Hindus and Sikhs formed one society till the end of the nineteenth century is 'entirely baseless'. Among other things, it ignores 'the creative institution of martyrdom' which was practically unknown to the Indian society, and which was based on the idea of supreme sacrifice for an ideal. In fact, the 'ideological, social, ethical and cultural separateness' of the Sikh from the Hindu society was a creation of the first three centuries of Sikh history. It was ridiculous to postulate that 'religion as a systematized sociological unit' was 'a relatively recent development'.49

Lectures on Religion, Sikh Identity and Politics in the Punjab Dhillon appears to visualize two categories of Sikhs. Those who were loyal to the scripture formed one category, whether Khalsa or non-Khalsa. The other category consisted of Sikhs who deviated from the spirit of the scripture. It is easy to see that the splinter groups coming down from the seventeenth century, like the followers of Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal and Ram Rai, could not have been regarded as Sikhs. Dhillon is quite explicit on the point that the Udasis could not be treated as Sikhs. They never joined the Sikh society because of their asceticism. They took charge of 'the virtually vacant Sikh shrines' when the Sikhs were fighting their political battles with the Mughals. The fact that the Mughals had no objection to Udasi occupation of Sikh shrines was a proof that they were not looked upon as a part of the Sikh society. They became instrumental in introducing Hindu practices at those shrines. The story of Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind, becoming an Udasi was a myth. He is not mentioned even by the Udasi Seva Das in his Parchian. Kesar Singh Chhibber clearly records that a Sikh should never become a bairagī, because Sikhism and renunciation represented two contradictory systems. The Udasis remained 'distinctly demarcated from the Sikh society'.50 The Singhs remained distinct from the 'fair weather friends' and 'converts of convenience' who did not shed all their earlier practices. As Malcolm observed in the early nineteenth century, the character of the latter differed widely from that of the Singhs. The descendants of Guru Nanak gained favours from the Sikh rulers and continued to have Singh and Hindu followers in spite of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. Oberoi makes no distinction between 'sanctioned and unsanctioned practices', and creates confusion by obliterating 'the line between cultural practices and aberrations'. Instead of seeing aberrations, Oberoi begins to treat the Khalsa as a 'sub-tradition'. There could be no question of initiation through charan-pahul after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. The new gurūs who started doing this were no other than the Nanak-Putras who later appeared in the Amritsar

Singh Sabha. They are seen by Oberoi as 'genuine Sikhs', and

their practices as authentic. Despite official support, however, their influence was swept away. This was because the Khalsa invoked the authority of Guru Granth, Sikh injunctions and the heroes of Sikh history, who had sacrificed their all to maintain the Sikh faith and its identity'. The Singh Sabha linked the Sikh community firmly with the Gurus and their religion. 51

IV

We may now look at the picture emerging from W.H. McLeod and Harjot Oberoi and their critique by G.S.Dhillon. McLeod starts with the perception of the protagonists of the Singh Sabha Movement that all was not right with the Sikhs because their beliefs and practices were not in consonance with the teachings of the Gurus and the Khalsa code of conduct. Therefore, they thought of reform. The leadership of the Lahore Singh Sabha was opposed to the leadership of the Amritsar Singh Sabha precisely because of their different understanding of the Sikh legacy. The 'Sanatan Khalsa' thought primarily of what was there in their own times; the 'Tat Khalsa' thought primarily of the earlier Sikh and Khalsa traditions. The Tat Khalsa and the Sanatan Khalsa differed in assigning relative importance to Khalsa and Sahajdhari identities but both accepted these two categories as the two components of the Sikh Panth. In the debate about Sikh identity, however, the positions taken were: (a) that the Khalsa identity was obligatory and the Khalsa were quite distinct from Hindus, and (b) that the Khalsa identity was voluntary and all Sikhs were Hindu. The third alternative that all Sikhs, wether Khalsa or Sahajdhari, were distinct from Hindus was not posed. According to McLeod, the Sahajdhari identity was less distinct only in comparison with the Khalsa identity. It is not easy to bracket the Sahajdharis with Hindus. The debate about Sikh identity ran in two channels because of the anxiety of the one party to establish Khalsa identity as the Sikh identity par excellence and the keenness of the other to establish that all Sikhs were Hindu. McLeod rejects Fox's idea that Khalsa identity was one of several equally important identities. However, McLoed sees the relevance of colonial rule for the emergence of the Singh Sabha Movement. The earlier Khalsa tradition was invoked by the Tak Khalsa to meet new challenges. Once the cherished ideal of the Tat Khalsa is grasped, all their activities fall into place including their insistence on Anand marriage. Philosophical initiative passed into the hands of the Tat Khalsa, and their strength was the strength of ideas. The Sahajdharis were not excluded from the Sikh Panth during the colonial period, but they were not exactly equal to the Khalsa within the Panth. In defining Sikh identity, the official role was far less important than the role of the Singh reformers.

Treating Sikh identity as a historical phenomenon, McLeod tries to sum up his findings for the contemporary situation. In terms of doctrines, he mentions the authority of the Adi Granth for the doctrine of Divine Name and the practice of nām simran. The sanctity of the Gurdwara as the most important Sikh institution was closely related to the concept of Guruship. The Sikh ardās implied equal veneration for all the ten Gurus in the accepted line of succession from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. In generic terms, McLeod finds no meaning in 'race' but the term 'nation' has a meaning. It seeks recognition for the Sikhs as a political community. Speaking pragmatically, McLeod mentions the ideal of equality as partially but not fully operative. He mentions three identities on the ground: the third, however, has lost much in comparison with its former recognition. Finally, a number of elements constitute distinct Sikh identity: belief in the ten Gurus, belief in the \bar{A} di Granth as the only scripture, belief in the doctrine of Divine Name and the efficacy of nām simran, sanctity of the Gurdwara as the Sikh corporate institution par excellence, preference for the Khalsa rahit including the Five Ks, belief in the doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth, acceptance of the Sahajdharis as Sikhs who are failing a little in their duties, belief in the value of Sikh history and Sikh tradition, denial of caste distinctions in spite of the tolerance of caste practices, equality of women with men in theory in spite of the existing differences in

practice and finally, the universality of the message of Sikhism with the implication that the Panth is open to all human beings, irrespective their caste, creed or nationality.

For Oberoi, the Singh Sabha Movement consisted of two components: the Sanatan and the Tat Khalsa. The former was holding the field when the Tat Khalsa appeared on the scene to triumph despite opposition. In Oberoi's formal discussion of the Sanatan tradition, its representatives turn out to be Sodhis, Bedis and Nirmalas, and a few other individuals associated with them, notably Avtar Singh Vahiria. In their exposition of Sanatan Sikhism, Oberoi mentions their acceptance of the authority of the Vedas and Purānas in addition to the Sikh scriptures, their belief in incarnation, their acceptance of the Sahajdharis as equal members of the Sikh Panth, their acceptance of varnashrama dharma which legitimized the Udasis and the idea of pollution, their tolerance of idol-worship and popular religion, and their belief in living Gurus.

The leaders of the Amritsar Sabha were rooted in Sanatan Sikhism which had emerged during the period of Sikh rule, especially in the early nineteenth century. The initiative for 'reform' was taken by a group of leaders who belonged to the social, religious and intellectual elites among the Sikh princes, aristocrats, gurūs and giānīs. Their objective was to conserve the tradition through reform, albeit moderate. Oberoi presents evidence against his own hypothesis when he tells us that the basic tenet of Sanatan Sikhism was belief in the Sikh Gurus and the Adi Granth. This would include the Khalsa and the Sahajdharis but not the other categories. The Sanatan assertion that only they who cut their hair after baptism should be called monā indicates the importance of Singh identity for them. Oberoi's assertion that the Sanantan Sikhs recognized several Sikh identities is belied by the evidence of the so-called Sanatanists: they recognized only two identities, the Khalsa and the Sahajdhari. In the light of all these observations, Oberoi's generalizations about the Sanatan tradition lose their validity. His statement about a Sikh going to the Golden Temple, Hardwar and the shrine of Sakhi Sarvar is not factual but hypothetical. It was almost impossible to find such a person on the ground. Finally, Oberoi's unreserved appreciation for his Sanatan tradition implies a value judgment which infringes the academic neutrality he professes to espouse.

The term Tat Khalsa like the term Sanatan, is taken over from the contemporaries at its face value. Education and print culture were the instruments used by both his Tat Khalsa and his Sanatan Sikhs. Thus, the element which was meant to distinguish the Tat Khalsa from the Sanatan Sikhs loses its significance. In defining the Tat Khalsa as a 'sub-culture' Oberoi gives too much importance to differences at the cost of shared beliefs, practices and attitudes. The importance given to the \bar{A} di Granth was not a new thing. Belief in the ten Gurus was an old belief, and so was the rejection of incarnation and gods and goddesses. Oberoi is wrong is stating that management of the Sikh shrines was always a prerogative of the rulers. The control and management of Darbar Sahib, for example, was taken over for the first time by Sikh ulers, and that too on behalf of the Sikh Panth. In theory, whatever pelonged to the Gurus earlier belonged now to the Panth. This was the claim that the Tat Khalsa put forth in opposition to the control and management of the instruments of the colonial rulers. Oberoi has paid no attention to the control and management of sacred space in the early Sikh history. Therefore, he looks upon the Tat Khalsa attitude as something novel. In his own presentation, the Anand marriage was an 'innovation'. However, there was the precedent of the Nirankaris. Some of the eighteenth century rahitnāmas have no role for Brahmans in Sikh marriage. Gurmukhi script was regarded as sacred by the Sikhs from the sixteenth century onwards. Punjabi was the language. When the question of scripts and language cropped up in the late nineteenth century, it was quite natural and logical for the Sikhs to espouse the cause of Gurmukhi and Punjabi. Oberoi tends to forget the context as well as the background in his use of the label 'innovation'. His preoccupation with the concept of episteme and praxis appears to colour his perception. He seems out to prove a thesis.

G.S. Dhillon looks upon Sikh ideology as entirely new in Indian history. It found clear expression in the early history of the panth, culminating in the institution of the Khalsa. Both in its 'external form' and its 'internal features', the Khalsa order presents a clear break with the Indian tradition. During the period of Sikh rule, when large scale conversion to Sikhism swelled the numbers, Brahmanical ideas and practices were retained by the new entrants. Popular religious practices were also there but much less among the Sikhs than among others. This was a measure of the success of the Gurus and their followers. In the early decades of British rule, the Khalsa tradition declined in terms of numbers and doctrines. The Bedi and Sodhi descendants of Guru Nanak and Guru Ram Das played an important role in bringing about this decline. The Singh Sabha, essentially, stood for going back to the ideology of the Adi Granth and the rahit of the Khalsa. Therefore, it should be regarded as 'a revival' of the earlier Sikh tradition and not as 'reform', and much less as 'a rupture'. McLeod, Oberoi and Dhillon are more or less agreed on what was done by the leaders of the Singh Sabha Movement and its revitalizing effect on the lives of a large number of Sikhs. However, they differ in their understanding of the linkages between the Singh Sabha and the earlier Sikh tradition. The difference is the widest between Oberoi and Dhillon. Oberoi's view of the Singh Sabha as a new episteme arising out of praxis precludes the possibility of any meaningful linkages with the past. What is hammered by Oberoi is 'rupture' even in its ordinary connotation. Dhillon argues that the Singh Sabha was a revival of the earlier Sikh tradition, but his depiction of the movement takes it close to reform. What he emphasizes is the links of the Singh Sabha with the Sikh past. McLeod recognizes continuity in the Sikh tradition from the time of Guru Nanak. He is emphatic that the Singh Sabha reformers systematized and clarified the Khalsa tradition to make it consistent and effective for propagation.

The close connection of Singh Sabha with 'Sikh identity' makes our authors conscious of the political implications of any

treatment of the Singh Sabha Movement. One of the reasons why Oberoi appreciates his Sanatan tradition is its tolerance and its adjustment with differences and deviations, obviating tension with others around. By contrast, the Tat Khalsa became the source of tension within the Panth and with outsiders, resulting in the withdrawal of certain groups from the Panth and in a running debate with the Arya Samajists and others. In fact the Tat Khalsa came into conflict with the state. Oberoi is conscious of the political implication of Dhillon's insistence on homogeneity. But he is silent about the political implication of his own interpretation, assuming it to be a work of 'pure academics'. Sikh identity for Oberoi becomes the source of tension with the state, while Dhillon holds the opposite end of the political pole: the unwillingness of the state to recognize the Sikhs as a political community is the essential source of crises. For McLeod, Sikh identity is relevant for politics but is not inevitably linked with any specific form of polity.

None of the three historians has paid adequate attention to the revival of the doctrine of Guru Panth by the Singh reformers in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. This egalitarian doctrine could facilitate the acceptance and advocacy of democratic institutions. Only on the basis of this doctrine, embodying the collective status and authority of the Panth, a demand could be made for the control and management of historic Gurdwaras and, eventually, a movement could be launched for taking over the Gurdwaras on behalf of the Panth, resulting in the statutory status of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. More than anything else, the doctrine of Guru Panth linked the Singh reformers with the eighteenth century Khalsa, just as the doctrine of Guru Granth linked them both with the Khalsa and pre-Khalsa Sikh tradition.

None of the three historians has paid serious attention to the Nirankari and the Namdhari movements, both of which are relevant for a discussion of Sikh identity. Both the movements arose in the pre-colonial period, giving central position to the *Granth Sahib*.

The Nirankaris were emphatic about the belief in and worship of one God, with an equally unambiguous rejection of god and goddesses and the worship of idols. They had no role for Brahmans in their rites and ceremonies even though they did not practice baptism of the double-edged sword and were, therefore, Sahajdharis. Baba Ram Singh introduced baptism of the double-edged sword for the Namdharis to make them 'Sant Khalsa'. He too had no role for Brahmans in the rites and ceremonies of the Sant Khalsa. The Sahajdhari identity of the Nirankaris and the Khalsa identity of the Namdharis was distinctly 'Sikh' in their own eyes as in the eyes of others. However, they did not subscribe to the doctrine of Guru-Panth and they did not respond positively or creatively to the colonial environment. This was their essential difference from the Singh reformers.

Finally, there is substantial and credible evidence by now to postulate that 'Sikh' entity began to emerge with the community of believers called the 'Sikhs of the Guru' (Gursikh) in the lifetime of Guru Nanak. Apart from their faith in Guru Nanak, they had faith in his $b\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ which was used for congregational worship. With the emphasis on nām simran was coupled the norm of remaining productive members of the society. Their own resources enabled the Sikhs to establish the community meal (langar) which cut at the root of the principle of social inequality even more than the congregational worship. The continuity of this core was ensured when Guru Nanak appointed a disciple to his own office, making the successor identical with the founder. Since all his successors were 'Nanak', all their followers were Nanak-Panthis. The principles of the unity of Guruship began to provide the criterion of allegiance to the Sikh Panth. The scripture and the Sangat came into parallel prominence with the Guru (leading eventually to the doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth). Social commitment was extended to embrace politics. Sacred spaces, rites and ceremonies, and rahit were given tangible forms. With the increasing socio-cultural articulation of the Sikhs increased their consciousness of self-identity. The outsiders were quick to perceive

the distinction. Thus, both before and after the institution of the Khalsa, the Sikhs were seen and they saw themselves as a distinct community.

Paradoxically, the demonstrably distinct identity of the Singhs during the eighteenth century in relation to the non-Singhs among the Sikhs induced outsiders to look at the Singhs and the non-Singhs as two different categories, underlining the differences of external appearance at the cost of their common faith in the basic doctrines of Sikhism and their participation in Panthic life. For the Sikhs, however, the Sikh Panth consisted of both the Keshdhari Singhs and the Sahajdharis Sikhs. This situation began to change in the late nineteenth century when, in response to assertions that Sikhs had no identity separate from the Hindus, the Singh Sabha leaders began to treat the Singh identity as the preferable Sikh identity because of its greater visibility. But they were also close to the Sikh tradition of the eighteenth century in which the Singh identity was the preferable Sikh identity. Their eventual success marginalized the Sahajdharis within the Sikh Panth.

Objective realities and subjective self-image are intermeshed in a consciousness of distinct identity in relation to others in any given historical situation. As the product of these variables, identity cannot be a static or 'fixed' entity. Nor can there be objective uniformity or 'homogeneity' among all the members of a community identified as distinct from others. Neither fluidity nor diversity, thus, invalidates distinct identity. The objective realities of the Sikh Panth and the present day have not remained the same, but the consciousness of distinction from others around has remained constant. Nor did 'others' try to argue that Sikhs were 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' till we come to the late nineteenth century.

In the late nineteenth century 'Sikh identity' began to impinge upon the political imagination of the Sikhs as well as the 'others'. Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha could see the political dimension of the assertion that Sikhs were Hindu. His exposition of Sikh identity was meant to show its political implication as much as its

made the Sikhs a political community. Sikh politics came to be based on Sikh identity. But he was not alone. The Chief Khalsa Diwan before and after 1920, the Shiromani Akali Dal before and after 1947, and the recent movement for Khalistan invoked Sikh identity as the basis of their politics. Sikh identity has become an issue of great importance positively for some and negatively for others. And that makes it a 'sensitive issue' for the scholar of Sikhism and Sikh history. Strictly as an academic issue, it is possible to recognize the distinct socio-cultural identity of the Sikhs from the sixteenth to the present century.

NOTES

- 1. W.H. McLeod, Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 60-70.
- 2. Ibid., pp. 70-2.
- 3. Ibid., pp. 72-7.
- 4. Ibid., pp. 77-9.
- 5. Ibid., p. 79.
- 6. Ibid., pp. 79-81.
- 7. Ibid., pp. 82-3.
- 8. Ibid., pp. 84-6.
- 9. Ibid., pp. 87-98.
- 10. Ibid., pp. 99-106.
- 11. Ibid., pp. 106-8.
- 12. Ibid., pp. 108-10.
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- 16. Ibid., pp. 11-13, 126-30.
- 17. Ibid., pp. 139-40.
- 18. Ibid., pp. 190-201.

- 19. Ibid., pp. 201-3.
- 20. Ibid., pp. 216-35.
- 21. Ibid., pp. 235-52.
- 22. Ibid., pp. 241-2, 253.
- 23. Ibid., pp. 254-7.
- 24. Ibid., pp. 260-78.
- 25. Ibid., pp. 279-303.
- 26. Ibid., pp. 305, 28.
- 27. Ibid., pp. 328-51.
- 28. Ibid., pp. 306-15.
- 29. Ibid., pp. 382-92.
- 30. Ibid., pp. 387-92.
- 31. Ibid., pp. 397-8.
- 32. Ibid., pp. 397-401.
- 33. Ibid., pp. 351-76.
- 34. Ibid., pp. 422-4.
- 35. Ibid., p. 381.
- 36. Ibid., p. 4.
- 37. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
- G.S. Dhillon, 'Some Recent Publications on Sikhism: An Evaluation', Insights into Sikh Religion and History, Chandigarh: Singh & Singh, 1991, pp. 187-92.
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- Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, 'Singh Sabha Movement A Revival', Advanced Studies in Sikhism, ed., Jasbir Singh Mann and Harbans Singh Saraon, Irvine: Sikh Community of North America, 1989, p. 234.
- 43. Ibid., pp. 235-8.
- 44. Ibid., pp. 339-40.

- 45. Ibid., pp. 241-2.
- 46. Ibid., pp. 249-59.
- 47. Ibid., pp. 243, 245-6, 247-8, 249-51.
- 48. Ibid., pp. 243, 244, 246-7, 248, 258.
- Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, 'Sikh identity: A Continuing Feature', Recent Researches in Sikhism, ed., Jasbir Singh Mann and Kharak Singh, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1992, pp. 228-32.
- 50. Ibid., pp. 232-240-1.
- 51. Ibid., pp. 232-3, 234, 237-8, 242.

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Part V SIKH IDENTITY AND POLITICS

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12

THE AKALIS AND KHALISTAN

The Shiromani Akali Dal was founded towards the end of 1920 soon after the formation of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. The primary purpose of both these organizations was to take physical control of the Gurdwaras associated with the Sikh Gurus and Sikh martyrs, and to manage their affairs as representatives of the Sikh community.

The Sikh concern for their sacred spaces can be appreciated if we realize that Gurdwara was by far the most important institution of the Sikhs since the days of Guru Nanak. There was a time when the Sikh sacred space was known as dharamsāl. It was the place where congregational worship was held, sacred food (parsād) was distributed, and community meal (langar) was prepared and eaten. This was also the place where matters of common interest to the local community could be discussed. The dharamsāl where the Guru was personally present was regarded for that reason as the premier institution, like Kartarpur (Dera Baba Nanak), Khadur Sahib, Goindval, Ramdaspur, Kiratpur and Anandpur. Also, the idea became current that the Guru was present in the sangat, which added a new dimension to the sanctity of the dharamsāl. This idea became all the more important when there was no personal Guru any more. This development reached its culmination with the doctrine of Guru-Granth; its presence in the dharamsāl approximated its sanctity to that of the premier dharamsāls of the days of the Gurus. Gradually, the name dharamsāl was dropped in favour of Gurdwara, literally the door of the Guru, because of the presence there of both the sangat and the Granth. The change in the name given to the Sikh sacred space was an index of its enhanced sanctity in the eyes of the Sikhs. This transition had become conspicuous before the end of the nineteenth century.

The doctrine of Guru-Panth induced the Akalis to put forth the claim to control the Gurdwaras and to manage their affairs. Personal Guruship had been abolished by Guru Gobind Singh before his death in 1708, with the enunciation that the office and the status henceforth was vested in the Shabad-Banī and the collective body of the Khalsa. This idea remained operative in the eighteenth century. With the establishment of Sikh rule, individual rulers began to exercise power in the name of the Khalsa, and the doctrine of Guru-Panth was relegated to the background. It was revived by the leaders of the Singh Sabha Movement in the late nineteenth century. By now the historic Gurdwaras were under the direct or virtual control of the British administrators, and the custodians of the Gurdwaras were not much concerned about their traditional role. The intrinsic importance of Gurdwaras and the doctrine of Guru-Panth inspired the Singh leaders to demand their control and management on behalf of the Sikh Panth. The pursuit of this objective crystallized in the form of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) and the Shiromani Akali Dal.²

Inevitably, the Akalis came into conflict with the British government. All through their anti-British struggle from 1921 to 1924, they received sympathetic support from the leaders of the Indian National Congress. However, they refused to merge their entity with the Congress. The Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925 gave constitutional recognition to a Central Board for the control and management of historic Gurdwaras. Its elected members gave it the name of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee to identify it with the body formed in 1920. The SAD became an independent political party basing its politics on Sikh identity.³

There is a general but erroneous impression that the leaders of the Singh Sabha Movement started insisting all of a sudden

that the Sikhs were not Hindu. The book entitled Ham Hindū Nahīn (We are not Hindus) is often referred to in this connection. Speaking historically, it would be more correct to say that some Hindus began to claim that Sikhs were 'Hindu'. Sikh Hindū Hain (The Sikhs are Hindu) was the title of two books which appeared in the context of this debate. A relevant question to ask, therefore, is why in the late nineteenth century for the first time some people started arguing that the Sikhs were 'Hindu'. There was a time when the term Hindu referred vaguely to the people of this country. This, for instance, is the usage in Alberuni's Kitāb al-Hind. With the coming of the Turks, the term Hindu tended to be used increasingly for 'Indians' who were not Muslim. It was used in two other senses during the medieval period: first, for the socioreligious system represented and upheld by the Brahmans; and second, for the upper caste non-Muslims. These connotations were not suddenly discarded in the nineteenth century, but the religious connotation steadily gained greater currency. The presence of Christian missionaries and the movements for socio-religious reform under colonial rule had much to do with this development. Even in the late nineteenth century several different meanings were attached to the term 'Hindu'. One question began to be posed rather sharply: whether or not Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Kabir-Panthis, the 'untouchables', and the tribal groups were to be included among the Hindus. Already before the end of the nineteenth century some of the Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab had given the answer that Sikhs were 'Hindu'.4

Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha's Ham Hindū Nahīn, which has turned out to be a classic statement of Sikh identity, was initially written in Hindi, indicating the audience for which it was primarily intended. He is quite explicit on the point that he wrote in response to the claims being made that Sikhs were Hindu. As a literary artifice, he reproduces the arguments put forth by the 'Hindu' participant in the debate. Bhai Kahn Singh's arguments are quite comprehensive in scope, relating to scripture, religious doctrines, the mode of worship, the code of conduct, the rite of initiation,

rites of passage, the character of the Sikh Panth, and consciousness of a separate identity. It is interesting to note that most of the time Bhai Kahn Singh invokes Sikh writings of the pre-colonial centuries in support of his arguments, covering a wide range and a strikingly large volume of Sikh literature. What is remarkable about this book is that, though his preference for the Khalsa or Singh identity is quite clear, he regards the sahajdhārīs (who did not take pahul and, therefore, did not necessarily keep their hair uncut or bear the epithet Singh) as an integral part of the Sikh Panth. The implication is extremely important. A distinct Sikh identity did not start with the Khalsa: it had already emerged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵

Indeed, one has to trace Sikh identity back to the time of Guru Nanak. To be a Sikh was to be a follower of Guru Nanak. He told his followers what to believe and what to do, not only through his sermons in prose but also through his poetic compositions. These compositions were used by his followers for worship in congregation. He told his followers that this mode of worship was the most efficacious for attaining liberation, and for them it was the only way. His successors wrote their own compositions, in the name of 'Nanak'. All these compositions were put together in the Granth compiled by Guru Arjan. The compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur were added to it later. It is now known as the Adi Granth, and is regarded as Guru Granth Sahib. The adoption of new beliefs, practices and institutions made the Sikhs conscious of their identity quite early in their history. The institution of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh appears to be a great landmark in this process precisely because it made Sikh identity externally and unambiguously conspicuous.

There is a long historiographical tradition in which the Khalsa figure as a community distinct from both Hindus and Muslims. In the eighteenth century Sikh literature itself the Khalsa are presented as different from both Hindus and Muslims. They represent 'the third panth'. There is hardly any doubt that the Khalsa identity was the most dominant identity among the Sikhs of the early

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nineteenth century. The colonial rulers were quick to recognize this fact. The change introduced by the Singh Sabha leaders has to be understood in terms of differences of degree, coherence, magnitude, and insistence on conformity. All this was made possible by the new means of communication, including education and the press.6

Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha has no objection to the Sikhs being called Hindu if the term meant simply Indian, without bringing in any religious dimension. The crucial question about the Hindu-Sikh debate is why at that particular juncture so much importance came to be attached to religious identity. A part of the answer is provided by Bhai Kahn Singh. He is keen to establish that the Sikhs were a distinct quam (earlier, panth), like Hindus and Muslims. To recognize this was to recognize that the Sikhs were a political community, a nationality. This recognition should lead to their worldly progress. To be an appendage of another qaum vas to remain at a perpetual disadvantage. To say this was not unpatriotic. The Sikhs were prepared to struggle for the common interests of all Indians, shoulder to shoulder with the other 'nations' like Hindus and Muslims. Overarching all of them was the Indian Nation. In a sense, Bhai Kahn Singh subscribed to the idea of communitarian nationalism.

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The Akalis subscribed to the idea of communitarian nationalism, and they were prepared to work in tandem with the Indian National Congress. However, with the transition from communitarian nationalism to secular Indian Nationalism in the 1920s and the 1930s, tension began to appear between the Congress and the Akalis on various issues from time to time: as in the deliberations of the Moti Lal Nehru Committee, the award given by Ramsay Macdonald, and the issue of support to the British government in the second World War. Much more serious than all these issues was that of Pakistan. The historical situation of the 1940s obliged the Akalis to think of the Sikh future in face of the growing

possibility of Pakistan being created with the consent of the Indian National Congress. In this context, we hear of 'Khalistan' for the first time in 1940.7

The term Khalistan was used by a medical doctor, V.S. Bhatti of Ludhiana, as the title of a pamphlet in 1940, published soon after the Lahore Resolution of the All India Muslim League, popularly known as the 'Pakistan Resolution'. Bhatti's Khalistan was meant to be a counterblast to the idea of Pakistan assumed to be embodied in the Lahore Resolution. Covering much of the area between the Chenab and the Jamuna, the Khalistan of Bhatti was meant to serve as a buffer state between India and Pakistan. With the Maharaja of Patiala as its head, Khalistan was to be a 'theocratic' state, consisting of several federating units. A corridor was to link it with the Arabian Sea. Master Tara Singh, who was President of the Shiromani Akali Dal at this time, denounced the pamphlet for making the confusion created by the Muslim League more confounding. Two conferences were organized by Baba Gurdit Singh of Komagata Maru to popularize the idea of Khalistan. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad expressed his disapproval of Khalistan by stating that some Akalis were using the Congress platform to propagate the idea of Sikh Raj for scuttling the idea of Pakistan.

The term Khalistan was never appropriated by the Akalis. But they came up with counterproposals in their opposition to the idea of Pakistan in the 1940s. With the prospect of freedom coming closer, their concern for the future became greater. In March-April 1942 Stafford Cripps conceded in principle that it was not obligatory for a province to join the Indian federation. This concession appeared to carry the implication that the Punjab could become an autonomous political unit outside the Indian state. The Akali leaders did not like to be subordinated permanently to Muslim majority. The Sikh All-Parties Committee submitted to Cripps the proposal of a province with different boundaries and different proportions of the three major communities of the Punjab. The name given to the province of their conception was 'Azad Punjab'. This gave the impression as if it was meant to be an independent

state. Keen to sell the idea, the Akali leaders explained subsequently that this province was meant to be a part of the Indian federation. The term $\bar{a}z\bar{a}d$ was meant to suggest that each community of this province would be free of the fear of domination by another community.8 The Muslims and Hindus of this province would account for the bulk of its population: 40 per cent each. The Sikhs would form the remaining 20 per cent. Rooted in a genuine fear that the creation of Pakistan would place the Sikhs under the domination of a hostile majority for ever, the Azad Punjab scheme was essentially a defensive strategy adopted in response to the recognition of the idea of Pakistan by the British Government through the Cripps proposals and by the Congress through its resolution of 2 April 1942. In their opposition to the idea of Pakistan, the Sikh leaders did not hesitate to share platforms with the leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha who stood for India as a single political unit. Unlike Khalistan, the Azad Punjab was to be a part of India; it was also to have a democratic constitution. All that the Sikhs could hope to gain was possibly an effective collaborative role in the affairs of the Azad Punjab.

The Azad Punjab remained on the political agenda of the Akali leaders for about two years. After the 'C.R. Formula' and the Gandhi-Jinnah talks on its basis, the Azad Punjab scheme was theoretically modified in two ways. Its name was dropped to bring in the idea of a Sikh state and this state was meant to be sovereign. However, in terms of the religious composition of the people in this state there was no change. Furthermore, its creation was conditional upon the creation of Pakistan. During the second half of 1944 the idea of this conditional sovereign Sikh state was advocated not only by the Akalis but also by many other Sikh leaders. This viewpoint was spelt out in a memorandum submitted to the Sapru Reconciliation Committee early in 1945 by Sikh leaders who represented nearly the entire community. The memorandum underlined the fact that, accounting for four million persons in British India, the Sikhs were numerically next only to Hindus and Muslims. But their political, economic and historical importance was much greater than their numbers. Their contribution to the defence and economy of the country was unique. The Punjab was their 'holy' land as well as their homeland. Nonetheless, the constitutional reforms of 1935 had reduced them to 'a state of political subjugation'. The Hindus as well as Muslims had disowned their mother tongue in favour of Hindi and Urdu. Discrimination against the Sikhs was exercised even in matters of religion. The Sikhs were opposed to 'any partition of India on a communal basis'. However, if the Pakistan scheme was accepted they would 'insist on the creation of separate Sikh State'. The aperative demand of the memorandum was a strong, united India, and weightage for the Sikhs in a reorganized Punjab.

The Sikh leaders in general and the Akali leaders in particular tried to promote their idea of a Sikh state in 1945. At the time of the Simla Conference in June-July, Master Tara Singh met Lord Wavell and emphasized that the Sikhs were strongly opposed to the creation of Pakistan. At the same time he expressed the view that if Pakistan was to be created then Jinnah should agree to the creation of a separate state for the Sikhs. The Akalis fought the elections of 1945-6 in cooperation with but independently of the Congress. Opposition to Pakistan, and not a Sikh state, was the foremost item on their agenda. The landslide in favour of the Muslim League more than neutralized their own unprecedented success in the elections. From a mere possibility, Pakistan advanced now to the stage of probability. Two days before the arrival of the Cabinet Mission in March 1946, the Shiromani Akali Dal passed a resolution in favour of 'the creation of a Sikh State'. When Master Tara Singh met the Cabinet Mission he underlined that the Sikhs were opposed to any division of India, but if a division was decided upon a separate state should be created for the Sikhs with the right to federate with Hindustan or Pakistan. Giani Kartar Singh was more categorical and asked for a separate Sikh state irrespective of whether or not Pakistan was created. The pleas and arguments of the Sikh leaders however cut no ice with the Cabinet Mission. Its recommendations went not only in

favour of the idea of Pakistan but also against any reorganization of the Punjab. The idea of a Sikh state was thus wholly set aside. In theory, the Akalis had the option to seek concessions from Jinnah as the condition of their consent to opt for Pakistan. In practice, they favoured the idea of getting the Punjab divided with the support of the Congress. During the last year of colonial rule, the Akalis worked in close cooperation with the Congress, and no Sikh leader talked of a Sikh state.

Understandably, the most elaborate argument in support of a sovereign Sikh state was published before the recommendations of the Cabinet Mission were made public. In April 1946, Gurbachan Singh of Sikh National College, Lahore, and Lal Singh Gyani of Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar, published The Idea of the Sikh State on the premise that the Congress would not resist the demand for Pakistan and India would be divided in the near future into Hindustan and Pakistan as two independent countries. Freedom for Hindus and Muslims would mean 'slavery' for the Sikhs who too constituted a 'nation'. As a nation, the Sikhs had the right to 'self-determination', admitted to be the 'right of nations all over the world'. As stated in the then recent resolution of the Shiromani Akali Dal, no constitutional safeguards and weightage were adequate for ensuring the growth of the Sikhs as 'a nationality with a distinct religious, ideological, cultural and political character'. An autonomous Sikh state, therefore, was 'the unconditional, absolute and minimum demand and political objective of the Sikh Panth as a whole'. This proposed state was to be 'democratic in constitution': it was to have 'a socialistic economic structure'; and it was to give 'full protection' to the minorities.

Gurbachan Singh and Lal Singh go into the background of the demand for an autonomous Sikh state. Its origins could be traced to the 'historical traditions' of the Sikhs, their 'inner urges' and their 'political ideals'. So long as there was no discussion of 'any political future' there was no occasion for giving expression to the concerns of the Sikh Panth. With the Simon Commission, however, the situation began to change. The Muslims of the Punjab began to clamour for a permanent majority in the province and the Sikhs responded by suggesting to Mahatma Gandhi in 1930 that a new province should be carved out of the existing Punjab. In 1931 they made the same suggestion to the Viceroys, Lord Irwin and Lord Willingdon. This demand was presented at the Second Round Table Conference by Sampuran Singh and Ujjal Singh.

However, the Sikh demands went unheeded, and the Communal Award was given. The Provincial Autonomy established on its basis caused terrible hardships to the Sikhs. Their religious rights were sought to be thwarted and their 'national' language, Punjabi, was sought to be suppressed. In 1940 came the Pakistan Resolution of the All India Muslim League. The Indian National Congress sought to appease the Muslims at the cost of the Sikhs. This disillusioned the Sikhs: 'in this situation emerged a further step in the old Sikh demand for splitting up the Punjab, called the Azad Punjab Scheme'. Its purpose was to ensure that the Sikhs held 'the balance of power' in the new province. They were canvassing support for this idea when 'Gandhi-Raja Formula' was floated. Its acceptance would have divided the Sikhs into two parts in two different states. Therefore, the Sikhs asked for a separate Sikh state. This was the only way in which they could survive 'in the midst of aggressive communalism'.

In the present-day world of total organization and mobilization of peoples no 'minority' could survive without 'political strength'. The aggressive communalism of Muslim and Hindu majorities presented a grave threat to the Sikhs and their identity. They needed a state in which they were free from aggression and in which they could make laws for themselves. 'The Sikhs do not seek to dominate anyone. They want to establish a secular democratic state, in which the bulk of the Sikh population may be concentrated. The economic basis of life in such a state is bound to be socialistic, in accordance with the traditions of the Sikh society, and the inner urge of the hardy, self-respecting Sikh peasantry.'

Sikh nationhood was essentially the product of Sikh history. Organized as 'the Khalsa', the Sikhs acted as a distinct and separate nation in the days of the misls and Ranjit Singh. They established a theocratic political organization first, and then a monarchical system. They were now organizing their national life on the democratic principle. The Gurdwara Reform Movement was a decisive landmark in the revival of the Khalsa. They began to run 'a kind of parallel Government' in the form of the SGPC which 'issued commands and ordinances, organized jathas, fought the bureaucracy and through its actions galvanized the entire Sikh people with a powerful feeling of their aroused nationhood'. With the emergence of the concept of the 'Indian Nation', Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs came to be treated as 'communities' with the result that these 'nations' were sought to be subordinated to the Indian Nation. The Sikhs had come out of this illusion 'fostered by the lust for domination by Hindu majority'. Having formed a true conception of their status, they demanded 'a National State for themselves'. No Sikh entertained any doubt about his nationality being different from that of the Hindus. The latent nationhood of the Sikhs had reasserted itself.

Gurbachan Singh and Lal Singh give a whole chapter to the, views of a number of political thinkers and leaders to prove their point that the Khalsa constituted a distinct 'nation'. They go on to argue that modern 'political theory has recognized in practice the principle of providing national states to the various nationalities'. More than forty new nation-states had emerged in Europe. The Jews had been promised a national home in Palestine, 'their sacred land'. The Sikhs were demanding nothing more than establishing themselves as 'a governing group, along with other groups in a democratic system'. The areas asked for the Sikh state were the areas covered by the Sikh homeland, 'a broad compact area of which the Central Punjab is the nucleus'. This 'Sikh Zone' was to cover the Lahore and Jullundur Divisions, parts of the Ambala and Multan Divisions, the Sikh princely states and the state of Malerkotla, and certain hill areas in the north and north-east. 'It is

in this land, which by virtue of proprietorship, development, historic-asociations and religious sanctity already belongs to the Sikhs, where the Sikhs wish to find a safe home, free from interference'. More than 80 per cent of the Sikhs lived in this zone and owned more than a quarter of its land.

Gurbachan Singh and Lal Singh do not mention the percentage of Sikhs in the total population. Nevertheless, they refer to 'minorities' within the Sikh state to whom a free, prosperous, happy and contented life is promised. But if the Sikhs were to be politically dominant in the Sikh state, it could not have a democratic constitution, because the Sikhs could not form a majority in this area of the Sikh state. Or, was it simply assumed that there would be no absolute 'majority' in the Sikh state? If so, the Sikh state differed from the Azad Punjab only in being sovereign. In no sense could it be called 'a Sikh State'. 10

We can see that the pamphlet on Khalistan had nothing to do with the Akalis. Its idea appealed to some Sikhs who were actually opposed to them. The Azad Punjab scheme involved reorganization to ensure that no religious community was in absolute majority in this reorganized politico-administrative unit of the Indian State. The relationship of this unit with the Indian State was not spelt out, but it may not be unsafe to assume that it was something like 'provincial autonomy'. The Sikh state conditionally demanded by the Akalis was different from the Azad Punjab essentially in being sovereign, rather than autonomous. This was true of their later demand for a sovereign state irrespective of whether or not Pakistan was created. With the Sikhs being no more than 20 per cent within the proposed state, this sovereign state was not really a 'Sikh' state. The proposal was unrealistic. There was no possibility of it being taken up seriously by the colonial administrators and politicians, even if some of them were sympathetic to the Sikhs.

In any case, after the elections of 1946 and the Cabinet Mission, the Akalis themselves were far more serious about the partition of the province in the hope of a better future for the

Sikhs in the Indian Union, with their three basic concerns: adequate share in political power, promotion of Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script, and protection of their religious identity.

III

The partition brought about an important demographic change in the East Punjab. The Hindus formed more than 60 per cent of the total population of this state. Their leaders were anxious to retain this majority status. The Sikhs formed about 35 per cent of the total population, a much higher percentage than what they had in the British Punjab. Furthermore, they were concentrated in six districts in which their population was actually more than half: Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Ferozepur. Then there were the princely states in which the Sikhs had a majority on the margin. This demographic change eventually came to have an important bearing on politics. Used to weightage in the British Punjab, the Akali leaders thought of weightage first in free India as well. However, the idea of weightage to religious minorities was categorically discarded by the Constituent Assembly. The Akalis demanded proportionate representation on the basis of joint electorates, with the right to contest general unreserved seats. This too was rejected by the Constituent Assembly. The Akali members of the Assembly were so resentful that they refused to sign the Constitution to be adopted on 26 January 1950.11

The Akali members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly joined the Congress party in March 1948 and three months later Giani Kartar Singh was included in the cabinet in place of the Congress Sikh member Ishar Singh Majhail. Within a year Gopi Chand Bhargava was replaced by Bhim Sen Sachar as the Chief Minister of the Punjab. In consultation with Giani Kartar Singh, Sachar evolved a language formula in 1949, known as the Sachar formula. A Punjabi zone was created by adding the Ropar and Kharar tahsīls of the Ambala district to the six Sikh majority districts. Punjabi was to be the medium of education at the primary level in all the schools of this zone. Hindi was to be introduced in the last year

of primary education. In the Hindi zone, the position of Punjabi was to be reversed. The Akalis had some reservations but they welcomed the formula as a reasonable solution of the language problem. Unfortunately, this scheme was not acceptable to the Arya Samaj leaders of the Punjabi zone: they refused to implement it. In fact the reaction among the 'Hindu' leaders was so strong that Sachar lost his Chief Ministership and Bhargava was back in office by October 1949. The Akali members were ineffective in the new ministry. The Working Committee of the Akali Dal decided to revoke the merger of the Akalis with the Congress on the grounds that the Congress leaders had belied all their hopes of constructive sympathy and support.

In 1952 the Akalis fought the elections on a new issue: the Punjabi-speaking state. The idea of reorganization on the basis of language was not new. It had been an important item on the agenda of the Congress since 1920. After 1947, however, the Congress leaders were no longer enthusiastic about it. The Dar Commission recommended in 1948 that no linguistic state be created without the consent of a substantial minority included in its area. Its report was accepted by a committee consisting of Nehru, Patel and Sitarammaya who made a recommendation of their own that in north India no provincial boundaries should be changed irrespective of the merit of any such proposal. The question of language appeared to carry political implications as well. Hukam Singh had tried to clarify in 1950 that the demand for a Punjabi-speaking state was democratic and secular. The Working Committee of the Akali Dal passed a resolution in favour of a state on the basis of Punjabi language and culture. Some of the Hindu leaders of the Punjab reacted to the demand by telling their followers to return Hindi as their mother tongue for the Census of 1951. They had canvassed for Hindi before 1947 also, but now their idea was to thwart the formation of a Punjabi speaking state by demonstrating that there was a substantial Hindi-speaking minority in the proposed Punjabi-speaking state. The movement for a Punjabi-speaking state continued for more than a decade and a large number of Punjabispeaking Hindus returned Hindi as their mother tongue in the Census of 1961 as well.

With their defeat in the elections of 1952, the Akali aspiration to be 'free and equal partners in the destiny of the country' became stronger. Before the year ended, Potti Sriramula died during a fast for the creation of Andhra Pradesh, and the Prime Minister announced the separation of Andhra from Madras as a Teluguspeaking state. As the movement for linguistic states gained momentum, the formation of States Reorganization Commission was announced before the end of 1953. The Akali leaders prepared their case on the basis of pre-1947 data. According to them there was an area of 90,000 sq km in which nearly 12 million persons spoke Punjabi. The Sikh population in this area was much less than a half of the total. Nevertheless, the proposal was countered by the protagonists of Maha Punjab who advocated the merger of Himachal Pradesh and a few districts of Uttar Pradesh as well as the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) with the East Punjab. The Commission came to the conclusion that the majority of the people were opposed to the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state, and recommended the merger of Himachal Pradesh as well as PEPSU with the East Punjab. The Akalis rejected the Commission's report on the day following its release on 9 October 1955.

Hukam Singh evolved a formula which met the essential demands of the Akalis without the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state. This came to be known as the Regional Formula. PEPSU alone was to be merged with the East Punjab, and the whole area was to be divided into two 'regions'. One of these was to be the Punjabi region in which the medium of school education was to be Punjabi. The other region was to give the same status to Hindi. Both the regions were to have regional committees for legislation on fourteen important subjects. The Regional Formula came closest to accommodating the political and cultural interests of the Akalis who accepted the scheme. The Working Committee of the Akali Dal also decided to have no political programme of its

own and to concentrate on the religious, educational, cultural, social and economic interests of the Sikh Panth.

The reorganized Punjab state was inaugurated on I November 1956 when Partap Singh Kairon was the Chief Minister. The Akali legislators joined the Congress party. Now, the Hindi Raksha Samiti agitated against the scheme and Kairon remained reluctant to allow the regional committees to legislate. In fact he tried to keep the former Akali leaders out of the Legislative Assembly and to dislodge the Akalis from the SGPC. Given Kairon's attitude and outlook the Regional Formula had little chance of success. Within a few years, the Akalis felt obliged to revive the movement for a Punjabi-speaking state.

The agitation launched by Master Tara Singh in 1960 proved to be a failure. By 1962 his place was taken by Sant Fateh Singh who presented the demand as clearly a linguistic demand. Both the leaders demonstrated their patriotism during India's war with China. During the war with Pakistan in 1965 Sant Fateh Singh was all out to support the government. Nehru had died in 1964 and Kairon had been assassinated early in 1965. There were new actors on the scene. After the ceasefire in September 1965 the Union Home Minister announced that the issue of the Punjabispeaking state would be examined all afresh. Lal Bahadur Shastri appointed a Parliamentary Committee under the Chairmanship of Hukam Singh, who was now the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. To advise the Parliamentary Committee, a Cabinet Sub-Committee was also constituted. It consisted of Indira Gandhi, Y.B. Chavan and Mahavir Tyagi. Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister in January 1966 after the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri. The Punjabispeaking state was inaugurated on 1 November 1966.

Contrary to the general impression, the new state was not created in accordance with the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee constituted by Lal Bahadur Shastri. Indira Gandhi was unhappy with this committee, especially because of the views of its Chairman. In her My Truth she makes it abundantly clear why she was not in favour of creating a Punjabi-speaking

state: she did not wish to deviate from a well considered policy of the Congress, and she did not wish to let down the 'Hindu supporters' of the Congress in the Punjab. Both these concerns arose primarily from electoral considerations. Without waiting for the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee, a resolution of the Congress in March 1966 accepted the principle of reorganization of the Punjab and a commission was appointed, known as the Shah Commission. The terms of reference given to the Commission stipulated that the Census of 1961 was to be used for data on language and the tahsIl was to regarded as the basic unit. Besides a large number of genuinely Punjabi-speaking villages, the Kharar tahsīl included Chandigarh. As a solution to the problem created by the terms of reference, the Union Territory of Chandigarh was created, and the Union Government took over the power and irrigation projects to act as the arbiter of river waters in case the two new states failed to come to an agreement. Sant Fateh Singh protested against all these decisions even before the new state was inaugurated. In December 1966 he went on fast on the issue of Chandigarh.

To these issues was added another: the relation of the state with the Centre. The idea of autonomy had begun to be aired before the reorganization of the Punjab in 1966. In May 1965 'Justice' Gurnam Singh, leader of the opposition in the Punjab Assembly, moved a resolution at a conference in Ludhiana in favour of a self-determined status for Sikhs within the Indian Union. It was interpreted by the press in the Punjab as demand for a sovereign Sikh state. In July 1965 Master Tara Singh, who was no longer influential, gave an elaborate argument in support of the idea of 'a Sikh Homeland', an autonomous state within the Indian Union. Opposing the Punjab Reorganization Bill in the Parliament, Kapur Singh referred to Nehru's statement of July 1946: 'I see no wrong in an area and a setup in the North wherein the Sikhs can also experience a glow of freedom'. Kapur Singh argued in favour of a Sikh Homeland with a special internal constitution and a special

relationship with the Centre irrespective of the number of Sikhs in this homeland.

Furthermore, the experience of the Akalis as the ruling party in the new Punjab between March 1967 and June 1971 convinced them that they could not exercise power adequately, or for long, under the constitution which placed the states at a great political and economic disadvantage in relation to the ruling party at the Centre. Within three years the Punjab was twice placed under the President's rule, virtually the rule of the ruling party. The Akalis lost the elections in 1972. A year later came the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Its basic thrust was on a genuinely federal system with only defence, foreign affairs, communications, and currency as the prerogatives of the Centre. Couched partly in the language of the supporters of a Sikh Homeland, it was interpreted by the opponents of the Akalis as 'secessionist'. The Akalis returned to power in 1977 and in a crowded conference held at Ludhiana in 1978, they reiterated their stand without any ambiguity in favour of a truly federal system.

The most important issues for the Akalis had, thus, emerged on the reorganization of the Punjab in 1966 and before their return to power in 1977: Chandigarh and other Punjabi-speaking territories, Centre-State relations, and river waters. On two of these, Indira Gandhi had already taken decision. On the issue of Chandigarh Sant Fateh Singh announced his decision to go on fast on 26 January 1970 and to immolate himself on 1 February if Chandigarh was not given to the Punjab. Indira Gandhi awarded Chandigarh to the Punjab. The award was meant to be implemented five years later, in 1975. At the same time she awarded Fazilka tahsII to Haryana with a corridor on the Punjab border with Rajasthan to link the awarded territory with the state of Haryana.

Indira Gandhi's decision on river waters came in 1976 after the Akalis had put up what was probably the strongest opposition in the country to the Emergency imposed by her in 1975. The non-riparian Rajasthan was given 8.00 maf of water. Of the remaining 7.20 maf, she gave 0.20 to Delhi and divided the rest in two equal shares for Haryana and the Punjab. Thus, the Punjab was to get 3.5 maf of water, which was less than what the state was actually using. The Akalis took up this matter with Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. He could tell the Rajasthan leaders that their state was not a part of the Indus basin but he was not prepared to change the award. He had no objection, however, to the Punjab going to the Supreme Court for adjudication. The matter was lying with the Supreme Court when the Akalis lost the elections in 1980.

In July 1981 Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, who had conducted successful agitation against the Emergency as the President of the Akali Dal, presided over a World Sikh Conference which directed the Akali Dal to plan dharmyudh for pursuing the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. An agitation was launched in September and memoranda of demands were sent to Indira Gandhi. She met the Akali leaders on 16 October 1981 primarily to identify issues which could then be taken up by the Foreign Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. A meeting with him later appeared to the Akali leaders to be 'a waste of time'. They met the Prime Minister again on 26 November. Indira Gandhi was not in favour of revising her earlier decision on the river waters but she gave assurances of much larger supplies of water and energy to the Punjab in the future on the basis of more scientific exploitation of resources. Within five weeks, she added 0.72 maf of water to the Punjab's share from an estimated surplus of 1.32 maf. At the same time, she gave 0.60 maf out of this surplus to Rajasthan, making it clear to the Akalis that their talk of Rajasthan not being a riparian state had no relevance. All the three Chief Ministers concerned accepted this decision. The Chief Minister of the Punjab was obliged to withdraw its case from the Supreme Court. It was decided to complete the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal for Haryana in two years. On their third and last meeting with the Prime Minister on 5 April 1982 the Akali leaders got the impression that she had already made up her mind to let the issues wait. But she was keen on the construction of the SYL canal.

The nahar roko (stop the canal) morchā of the Akalis against the construction of the SYL canal failed to evoke much response. Another call a month later failed to mobilize the peasantry. The Akalis decided to launch a dharmyudh morchā on 4 August 1982 to get all their demands accepted. Soon afterwards, Sant Jarnail Singh joined the dharmyudh morchā, and it picked up. It became increasingly difficult for the government to find room for the agitating volunteers in the existing jails. Indira Gandhi decided to release the Akali volunteers on the Diwali day in October. Swaran Singh hammered out a mutually acceptable formula on the important issues of Chandigarh, river waters, and the Centre-State relations. A cabinet sub-committee consisting of Pranab Mukherjee, R. Venkataraman, P.V. Narsimha Rao and P.C. Sethi accepted the formula and Swaran Singh told the Akali leaders that the government had approved of it. But the statement placed before the Parliament turned out to be materially different from what had been agreed upon. The Prime Minister had changed her mind. The Akalis decided to hold a demonstration in Delhi at the time of the Asiad. Amarinder Singh negotiated another mutually acceptable agreement. But this was sabotaged by Bhajan Lal, the Chief Minister of Haryana, with the assurance that he would not let the Akalis pass through his state, and no Sikh was allowed to pass through Haryana without being humiliated.

Not to have gained anything through negotiations was a setback for the Akalis. Sant Longowal asked the Akali legislators to resign their seats with effect from 21 February 1983. He also gave a call to ex-servicemen for a meeting at Amritsar. Nearly 5,000 responded. In April 1983 the Akalis organized the *rastā roko* (block the roads) campaign. Twenty-six persons were killed in the violence that erupted in spite of their peaceful intention. In June, they organized the *rail roko* (stop the trains) campaign and the government decided not to run any trains. Yet there was some violence. The *kām roko* (stop work) campaign of August 1983 proved to be a great success. And so was the *bandh* they organized in February 1984 to demonstrate their strength and their trust in

non-violent agitation. Within a week, a meeting of five Akali leaders, five cabinet ministers, five secretaries and fifteen leaders of the opposition parties was held at Delhi. The meeting came close to a successful settlement but anti-Sikh violence was orchestrated in Haryana, and the Akali leaders returned to the Punjab. Before the end of the month, the Akalis burnt the pages of the Constitution containing Article 25 (2)(b) at Delhi and Chandigarh. They were arrested, but the government also announced its willingness to amend the Article. Early in March, Indira Gandhi appointed the Sarkaria Commission to go into Centre-State relations but the Akalis did not withdraw the *morchā* because her decision was unilateral. She also began to prepare secretly for an army action.

IV

The idea of Khalistan was advertised by Jagjit Singh Chauhan in the New York Times in October 1971. Four years earlier he had enjoyed a short spell of power as a minister in the Cabinet of Lachhman Singh Gill who was Chief Minister of the Punjab for nine months in 1967-8. Living now in England, Chauhan had no following in the Punjab. His idea of Khalistan was treated as a joke but it could embarrass the Akalis and tickle their opponents in politics. Whenever he visited India he was treated well by some eminent leaders of the Congress. About a decade later, in June 1980, Balbir Singh Sandhu announced the formation of Khalistan, claiming himself to be the Secretary of the National Council of Khalistan with Jagjit Singh Chauhan as its President. This organization existed only on paper. In March 1981, a US citizen, Ganga Singh Dhillon, who was known to Chauhan, addressed the annual session of the Sikh Educational Conference organized by the Chief Khalsa Diwan, and put forth the view that the Sikhs formed a'nation'. The implication was that a demand for independence could be justified on that basis. Soon afterwards, however, the Chief Khalsa Diwan dissociated itself from Dhillon's statement and expressed its complete loyalty to the Indian State.

The White Paper on the Punjab published by the Government

of India mentions another significant group which operated from overseas, the Dal Khalsa. It had been formed at Chandigarh in April 1978. Its President was a stenographer of the Punjab University who had published a pamphlet on Khalistan. The term 'Dal Khalsa' served as a reminder of the 'national army' of the Sikhs which had succeeded in establishing sovereign Sikh rule during the late eighteenth century. In 1979 it contested elections for the SGPC, but without any success. In 1982 the responsibility for throwing the head of a cow in a Hindu temple was reported to have been claimed by the Dal Khalsa. The Dal was generally seen as associated with Sant Jarnail Singh but he never acknowledged that it had anything to do with him. Indeed, the founding of the Dal Khalsa is attributed to Giani Zail Singh who paid the bill for its first meeting at the Aroma Hotel at Chandigarh and who used to ask journalists to give prominence to its activities. From the viewpoint of a movement for Khalistan, the activities of the Dal in the Punjab were hardly of any account.

The Khalistan movement has been associated with Sant Jarnail Singh more than with anyone else. What has been published on his life and of his speeches enables us to notice some of the relevant aspects of his activities and attitudes. He was initially a protagonist of religious reform. He assumed the headship of Damdami Taksal at the age of thirty in 1977 on the death of his predecessor, Sant Kartar Singh Bhindranwale. An open conflict with the Sant Nirankaris, who were looked upon as heretical by Sant Kartar Singh, was a legacy inherited by Sant Jarnail Singh. The armed clash on the Baisakhi day of 1978 at Amritsar was an extension of this legacy, underlining the religious dimension of Sant Jarnail Singh's outlook and attitude. He continued to declare till his death in June 1984 that religion was his sole concern. For him, the Adi Granth was the only sacred scripture of the Sikhs; Guruship was vested in this Granth, giving it the status of Guru Granth Sahib. The Khalsa code of conduct provided the only valid mode of life for the Sikhs. He believed in fact that the antidote to external and internal threats to Sikhism was strict conformity to the Khalsa way of life. Insistence on the maintenance of the external form and hostility to drugs and alcohol appear to flow from his religious outlook. That this concern distinguished him in his own eyes from the other Sikh leaders comes out clearly in a statement he made in 1984 that he was responsible only to the cause of Sikhism, to uphold the symbols of the faith, to see that the beards of the Sikhs remained intact, their hair uncut, and that they did not go after the evil things in life, like alcohol and drugs.

However, there was another dimension of his religious outlook. To bear arms was a religious duty of the Sikhs. The choice of arms was not confined to the sword (kirpān) as one of the obligatory five Ks. It was extended to modern weapons, which carried the implication that they were meant to be used. The use of physical force was a legitimate part of religion for him. If anything, his insistence on the use of arms went on increasing. Quite explicitly he told his audience from the roof of Guru Ram Das Langar when he was virtually confined to the Golden Temple complex:

For every village you should keep one motorcycle, three baptized Sikhs and three revolvers. These are not meant for killing innocent people. For a Sikh to have arms and kill an innocent person is a serious sin. But, Khalsaji, to have arms and not to get your legitimate rights is even a bigger sin. It is for you to decide how to use these arms. If you want to remove the shackles of your slavery you must have a plan.

In other words, you had to be up in arms against the enemies of the faith. In his mind, hostility towards the government easily got transferred to 'Hindus': 'If you do not have the five "ks", if you are not armed with a rifle and a spear, you will be given the beating of your lives by the Hindus'. The reference here is to the killing of Sikhs but even otherwise Sant Jarnail Singh could bracket 'Hindus' with the government. 'I only finish those', he said on another occasion, 'who are enemies of the Sikh faith like police men, government officials and Hindus'.

The language used by Sant Jarnail Singh has been generally interpreted to support the view that he was leading an armed struggle for Khalistan. Naturally, his movement is looked upon as 'secessionist'. The White Paper issued by the Government of India refers to secessionist and anti-national activities which had the objective of establishing an independent state for the Sikhs with foreign support. The activities of Sant Jarnail Singh are included in this view of the situation. However, when he was asked by a journalist in 1983 whether or not he supported the demand for Khalistan, his reply was: 'I am neither in favour of it nor against it. If they give it to us, we won't reject it'. He repeated this in March 1984. In one of his morning darbars on the roof of the Langar he asked the audience if they wanted Anandpur Sahib Resolution implemented in full. Hands were raised by the congregation and Sant Jarnail Singh was satisfied: 'You need not say anything more'. He warned the Akali leaders that if they accepted anything less than all the demands in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution he would expose them before the Sikhs. On the eve of the Operation Blue Star, when the Akali leaders were in favour of a settlement with the government, he refused to agree on anything less than the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Thus, whereas his activities and his informal responses to questions on Sikh independence may seem to point towards Khalistan, his formal stand did not go beyond autonomy for the Punjab as a part of the Indian Union.

Articulation in favour of Khalistan became more pronounced after the death of Sant Jarnail Singh. For this development, it is possible to see the relevance of the Operation Blue Star and the Sikh massacres in Delhi in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination. Even more important was the failure of Rajiv-Longowal Accord. In any case the number of militant groups and the number of youngmen who joined them during seven years after the death of Sant Jarnail Singh appears to have been far larger than their number during the seven years of his own activity from 1977 to 1984. Many of the Sikhs living in Great Britain,

Canada and the United States were vocal in favour of Khalistan. Many of the militants working in the Punjab made no secret of their political objective. Continuity was provided by two important organizations: the All India Sikh Students Federation (which had been closely associated with Sant Jarnail Singh under the leadership of Bhai Amrik Singh, the eldest son of Sant Kartar Singh), and the Damdami Taksal. On their initiative, a meeting of the Sarbat Khalsa (in theory, the entire body of the Sikhs) was held at the Golden Temple on 26 January 1986. A flag of Khalistan was hoisted and the Akal Takht rebuilt by the government was demolished. Khalistan was proclaimed a few months later. In August 1987, at a convention called by the Acting Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Professor Darshan Singh, it was declared that the goal of the Sikh Panth was to have a political set up in an area in which the Sikhs could experience a glow of freedom (presumably within the Indian State). This did not satisfy the militants. They continued their activity for at least five years more.

V

Both the Alkalis and the protagonists of Khalistan invoked Sikh identity as essentially relevant for their political programmes. It figured prominently in their political discourses and praxis. What they shared was primarily the Khalsa or Singh identity. It was visible in their external appearance. They wore kesh and turban, kept a flowing beard and uncut hair, carried a kirpan, and wore karā and kachh. These four symbols begin with the letter 'k'. The fifth 'k' is kanghā or the comb tucked in the kesh for keeping the hair clean and orderly. The five Ks form the most important items in the Khalsa conception of rahit. The strictest prohibition is on the use of tobacco in any form. Sant Jarnail Singh favoured the idea of bearing modern weapons in addition to a long sword. For prohibition, he added drugs and alcohol to tobacco. On the first point, he was closer to the Khalsa of the eighteenth century. On the second, he was more in conformity with the Adi Granth. Whereas the followers of Sant Jarnail Singh insist on amritdhārī identity, involving the observance of the five Ks after the baptism of the double-edged sword (pahul or amrit), the Akalis prefer this identity but do not seriously object to a Singh identity less exacting than the amritdhārī identity. Besides carrying the epithet 'Singh' in one's name, by far the most important items of this identity are keeping the hair uncut, wearing turban, and refraining from the use of tobacco. Ordinarily, the Singhs of this description would wear karā and less frequently also kachh. Theoretical preference for amritdhārī identity is thus common to both the Akalis and the Damdami Taksal, but they differ in actual practice. Since the keshdhārīs have been far larger than the amritdhārīs, the Akalis have worked with a much broader base.

Apart from external appearance, the Akalis and the Damdami Taksal observe distinct rites of passage - ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and death. On these, as on several other occasions, the Adi Granth is of crucial importance. No such ceremony can be performed without it. This is because the $\bar{A}di$ Granth is not only the exclusive scripture of the Sikhs in the eyes of the Akalis and the followers of Sant Jarnail Singh but also the embodiment of the Guru. Therefore, Guru Granth Sahib is its proper title. This title and this attitude spring from the doctrine of the continuity of Guruship. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith and the Sikh Panth, was followed by nine successors. Just as he chose Angad to be the Guru, and Guru Angad chose Amar Das, and so on, Guru Gobind Singh chose the Adi Granth to be the Guru. What ended with the death of Guru Gobind Singh was personal Guruship but not Guruship itself. The reverence and regard which the Sikhs of the ten Gurus gave them are due now to Guru Granth Sahib as well. This doctrine of Guru-Granth, it must be added, is nearly 300 years old, and the equation of Gurbāņī with the Guru can be traced back to the sixteenth century. Since the Gurus have spoken through the Granth, the only valid source of Sikh ideas and ethics is Guru Granth Sahib. The known injunctions and practices of the ten Gurus are added to this source. Both the Akalis and the followers of Sant Jarnail Singh agree that

the \bar{A} di Granth inculcates monotheism or worship of One God and rejects gods, goddesses, incarnations, and idols. Sikh doctrines and Sikh worship too, therefore, are distinctive.

The basic difference between the Akalis and the Sant was the latter's conviction that the time for the use of arms had come. Even the Government of India could see this difference. At the time of the Operation Blue Star, Lt. General Sunderji was told by the government that there were two groups in the Golden Temple complex: one, that of Sant Jarnail Singh and the other, that of Sant Longowal. He was instructed to ensure that there was no fighting between the two groups. The 'extremists' were to be flushed out without any damage to the Golden Temple and the least possible damage to the Akal Takht. These instructions indicate that Sant Longowal and his followers were not to be treated as 'extremists'.

Nevertheless, there has been a general tendency to bracket the Akalis with the militant secessionists. The Akalis have never relinquished the claim to represent the Sikh Panth. The form in which this recognition was sought in 1945-6, that is, a sovereign state, was never forgotten by their opponents after 1947. The ultimate design of sovereignty, and therefore of secession was seen in every important political move or demand of the Akalis, particularly by their opponents. That was why even the 'paper tiger' like Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the Dal Khalsa, and Ganga Singh Dhillon could create some political ripples.

More important than the colonial background were the compromising gestures of the Akalis towards the militants in the recent past for bracketing them with the secessionists. Many of the Akali leaders showed willingness or even keenness to participate in the mortuary rites (bhogs) of some known or alleged militants. One of the Akali demands in 1981 was the release of Sant Jarnail Singh. In 1982 he was allowed to merge his morchā with the Akali dharmyudh. No one could stop him from staying in one of the 'hostels' of the SGPC, where the government also could reach

him if it wanted to, but towards the end of 1983 he was allowed to stay in the Akal Takht, which could not be done without the tacit consent or weakness of the SGPC.

The compromises made by the Akalis in the given situation are understandable. They wanted to use the Sant in their struggle against the government just as the party in power was trying to use him against the Akalis. According to Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, Giani Zail Singh had enabled Sanjay Gandhi to discover the Sant for breaking the Akali Dal after its electoral success in 1977. They also looked for a religious issue that could be politicized and they identified the Sant Nirankaris. The Dal Khalsa, floated by them some time later, was also anti-Nirankari. After the death of twelve Sikhs at the hands of the Nirankaris on the Baisakhi day of 1978 at Amritsar, anti-Nirankari agitations were encouraged not by the Akalis but by the Congress party. The Dal Khalsa and Sant Jarnail Singh contested elections for the SGPC in 1979 against the Akali candidates. In 1980 Sant Jarnail Singh campaigned for Congress candidates, including R.L. Bhatia, and he is believed to have shared a platform with Indira Gandhi. In any case, she admitted that he had supported a Congress candidate. After the murder of Baba Gurbachan Singh, the Nirankari Guru, in April 1980, Giani Zail Singh told the Parliament that Sant Jarnail Singh had nothing to do with the murder. After the murder of Lala Jagat Narain in September 1981, the Chief Minister of the Punjab wanted to get Sant Jarnail Singh arrested as a suspect. He was in a Haryana village at that time. Giani Zail Singh rang up Bhajan Lal to tell him not to let the Sant be arrested. When the Punjab government did arrest him in October, Giani Zial Singh told the Parliament that there was no evidence of his involvement in the murder. He was released. After the murder of Santokh Singh at Delhi in December 1981, his memorial service was attended by Sant Jarnail Singh as well as Giani Zail Singh and Rajiv Gandhi.

Even after 1981, when the Sant fell out with the government, Indira Gandhi continued to consult Giani Zail Singh when he became the President of India. It was possibly due to his influence that Sant Jarnail Singh was not arrested after the murder of a DIG of police in April 1983 in the precincts of the Golden Temple. When the government of Darbara Singh was suspended and President's rule was imposed due to the cold-blooded murder of some Hindu passengers in the first week of October 1983, a senior colleague of Darbara Singh claimed that President Zail Singh was in daily contact with the Sant. The implication was that Darbara Singh's downfall had been brought about through the Sant's instrumentality. Indira Gandhi maintained contact with Sant Jarnail Singh through R.L. Bhatia who remained in regular contact with Bhai Amrik Singh till April 1984.

During his five-year tenure as Chief Minister of the Punjab, Parkash Singh Badal raised none of the issues which had led to the Operation Blue Star and which were sought to be resolved through the Rajiv-Longowal Accord. The Akali leaders do not talk even of autonomy for the states of India. There may be many reasons for their silence. But their silence is eloquent enough to suggest that they had nothing to do with Khalistan. The Shiromani Akali Dal by now is a political party with vested interests. Its leaders are the most formidable opponents of the idea of a sovereign Sikh state which is bound to put an end to their leadership.

In a debate in the Legislative Assembly of the Punjab, the Congress Chief Minister referred to the bivalent attitude of the Akalis towards Sant Jarnail Singh and the militants. The leader of the opposition accused the Congress of supporting the Sant and pursuing a policy of discrimination against the Sikhs. Both sides appear to be right.

NOTES

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- 4. The issue of Hindu-Sikh Identity has been discussed in the previous chapter.
- 5. See the chapter on 'Formation of Sikh Identity', above.
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- J.S. Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab (The New Cambridge History of India, II. 3), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 181-204.
- 12. The Akalis never demanded a sovereign state for the Sikhs after 1946. There has been a demand for Sikh Homeland, standing in a special relationship with the Centre and having a special internal constitution, but only by individuals or small splinter groups of the Akalis. What the Akalis have insisted upon is autonomy for the Punjab as for other states in the country, a truly federal system, something like the system visualized by the Constituent Assembly before it became clear that Pakistan was going to be created as a separate state. The Akalis have never resorted to arms for any political objective.

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GLOSSARY

abarn: one who does not belong to a varna, an outcaste.

ahimsa (ahinsa): the principle of non-injury to a living being, originally emphasized in Jainism and Buddhism.

ajāt: one who has no caste (jāt), an outcaste.

amāvas: the day of the dark night in a lunar month.

amritdhārī: a Sikh who has been administered baptism of the double-edged sword.

amritsar: literally the pool of the nectar of immortality; the term originally used for the tank constructed by Guru Ram Das; the usage was extended to the town of Ramdaspur as Amritsar by the early nineteenth century.

anbhav: experience, generally experience of the divine.

ang sevak: a person who is at another's service all the time; a protector of the body, a body guard.

ankush: the goad used by an elephant driver.

arhat: a Buddhist monk.

āsaņa: posture; the place or position occupied by a religious luminary, especially among the yogIs (jogIs).

āshramas: the four stages of life prescribed in Brahmanical texts.

asnān (isnān): bathing, a ritual bathing; an outward symbol of inner cleanliness.

aukhad: a medicine; used as a metaphor for the message of the Name in Sikh thought.

āvāgavan: coming and going; taking birth and dying; the cycle of transmigration.

avtār: incarnation; divine incarnation, especially of Vishnu.

bairāgī: a renunciate, usually a Vaishnavite.

bandā: a slave; a servant; a devotee of God.

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 $b\bar{a}\eta\bar{i}$ ($v\bar{a}\eta\bar{i}$): speech, the compositions of the Gurus and the bhagats recorded in the \bar{A} di Granth; the amplified form $gurb\bar{a}\eta\bar{i}$ or $bhagat-b\bar{a}\eta\bar{i}$ is commonly used.

banjārā (vanjārā): a trader; a carrier of grain and other goods for sale.

barat: fasting, regarded as meritorious.

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bāzār: a street with shops, a market.

bemukh: without the face; one who turns away, especially from the Guru.

bhaktī: loving devotion to God or a human incarnation of Vishnu.

bhānā: pleasure, divine pleasure.

bhekh: a garb, a garb peculiar to a group; the outward appearance.

bīchār: thought, reflection.

bikhiā: poison; used for māyā.

birādarī: a brotherhood or a cousinhood; a group of collaterals.

bodī: tuft of hair over the head.

chalūlā (chūn lālā): a poppy flower.

chandal: the lowest of the low; an untouchable.

chaudharī: the hereditary headman of a group of villages for collecting revenues on behalf of the government.

chaukā: the eating square, generally used by a Brahman to keep out pollution.

chātrik: the rain bird.

dāj: dowry; used as a metaphor for good deeds.

dakshinā: an offering made to a teacher or a Brahman for his services.

 $d\bar{a}n$: something-given in charity; contribution from an honest earning for the welfare of others.

darbār: a court; the court of a deity or a religious teacher.

darvesh: a pious person, generally used for the Sūfī mystic in Islam.

derā: a camp; a religious establishment.

Dhamma: the doctrines of Budhism; the ethical code propagated by Ashoka.

dharma: the appropriate moral and religious obligations attached

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to any particular section in Hindu society; duty, moral obligation; a righteous cause.

dharmyudh: war in a righteous cause.

dhiān: the practice of meditation on God.

dīn: religion; religious or spiritual matters.

dīn-dunī: religion and the world; matters both spiritual and temporal.

dīwān: the keeper of a treasury; the head of the finance department; an honorific given to Hindu nobles by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors.

dohāgan: a woman who fails to have union with her husband. dom: a category of the outcaste.

dubidhā: duality; double-mindedness; attachment to the world and God at the same time.

durmat: false principles as opposed to the true principles of the Guru.

faqīr: a pious person; a devotee of God; used generally for a Muslim mendicant.

farmān: an order; a royal order, an imperial order; used for the written order of a Mughal emperor.

Five Ks: the five items of the Khalsa rahit, each starting with the letter k (kesh, kirpān, kachh, kanghā and karā).

giān: knowledge, knowledge of the divine.

giānī: a person who has attained divine knowledge; a learned person, especially among the Sikhs.

goshtī: a discussion, a religious dialogue; generally used for the discussions of Guru Nanak with the representative of the religious systems of his times.

Gurdwara (gurdwārā): the door of the Guru; the Sikh sacred space, also called dharamsal in the early centuries of the Sikh movement.

Gurmat: the principles enunciated by Guru Nanak and his successors; Sikh philosophy.

gur-maryādā: the norms of Sikh beliefs and practices.

gurū: a preceptor; a religious teacher; an epithet used for the founder of Sikhism and each of his nine successors, and also for the *Granth Sahib* and the Panth.

hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca.

halāl: lawful; the Muslim way of slaughtering an animal for meat.

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halemī rāj: the phrase used by Guru Arjan for an order free from oppression.

haumai: self-centeredness; giving primacy to the self.

hīṇa jātī: lower than the four castes; the outcaste.

hom: ritual sacrifice to the fire.

hukam: an order; the divine order.

hukamnāma: an order, generally used for letters of the Sikh Guru to his followers.

iftira': falsehood.

jagātī: from zakātī, a collector of taxes.

 $j\bar{a}g\bar{i}r$: an assignment of land revenue in lieu of salary for performing service for the state.

jāgīrdār: the holder of a jāgīr.

jāgīrdārī: the system of paying land-revenue in lieu of cash salary.

jal-parwāh: the practice of throwing a dead body into running water as an alternative to burial or cremation.

 $janj\bar{u}$: the thread worn by the upper caste Hindus, regarded as a sacred symbol.

jathā: a group, a band; used particularly for the fighting unit of the Khalsa in the eighteenth century.

jāti: a division within the broader category of caste, related to occupation; generally an endogamous group.

jTvan-muktI: liberation-in-life, conceived as a passive state of bliss or as active participation in social life.

jajmānI: the client-patron relation in which customary services were rewarded in kind, seasonally and occasionally.

kāfīr: an infidel in the eyes of Muslims.

kalima: the statement that 'there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger; used for initiating a person into Islam.

kalpa: a cosmic cycle, consisting of cosmic ages (yugas).

kāma: a desire, especially sexual; regarded as one of the four basic goals of life, the other three being dharma, artha and moksha. kanyā: an unmarried girl.

karhā parshād: sacramental food distributed in Gurdwaras to all persons present, generally prepared with equal quantities of wheat flour, sugar and ghee.

karmadān: contribution by way of manual labour.

karm-kānd: the belief that certain ritual practices can lead ultimately to release from the cycle of transmigration; equated sometimes with the path of action, as distinct from the path knowledge and the path of bhaktī.

kasumbh: a flower used as a dye that easily fades.

kateb: plural of kitāb (book), for the semitic scriptures - the Torah, the Injil and the Qur'ān.

kathā: an exposition of the Guru's verses, generally connected with the life of the Guru.

kesh: unshorn hair worn by a baptized Khalsa, regarded as of great sanctity.

Keshdhārī: a Sikh who wears kesh.

khān: a title for a member of the Turko-Afghan ruling class.

kirpā (kripā): kindness, grace.

kIrtan: the singing of hymns from the sacred scriptures of the Sikhs; hence kIrtan darbar for an elaborate performance.

kiryā: the performance of a traditional Brahmanical ritual appropriate for the occasion like death, marriage or birth.

kroh (kos): a measure of distance, about 4 kms.

kūkar: a dog, as a symbol of lowliness.

kumārg: a wrong path.

kusangat: an evil association.

lagan: an auspicious time for marriage or betrothal.

langar: the kitchen attached to a Gurdwara from which food is served to all regardless of caste or creed; a community meal; a kitchen.

lekhā (lekho): accounts; generally the account of deeds performed in one's life on the earth.

lingam: the male organ as the symbol of Shiva's power of creation and regeneration; also regarded as a shaft of light.

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mahājan: a respectable person, used generally for a trader; used also as a surname.

mahal: a place; used for the Sikh Gurus in the order of succession. mahāras: the great juice, a metaphor for the state of sahaj or

liberation, a state of eternal bliss.

mahürat: an auspicious time for any kind of important undertaking.
majīth: a dye that imparts a fast colour.

mālā: a rosary, generally worn round the neck.

malik: a title for a member of the ruling class under the Turko-Afghan rule.

manmukh: one who turns to one's own mind as opposed to the one who turns towards the Guru (Gurmukh).

math (matha): a monastery; a religious establishment.

māyā: material things, as the source of attachment, pleasure and entanglement.

melā: a fair or a festival.

mlechha: impure, generally used for outcastes and Muslims in Brahmanical literature.

moh: attachment to worldly things as opposed to prem or love for God.

momin: a true believer, a Muslim.

morchā: a battle front; an agitational struggle.

muktī: liberation as freedom from the chain of death and rebirth, the cycle of transmigration.

mullā: popularly used for the keeper of a mosque.

munsif: one who does justice.

muwāhid: one who believes in the unity of God without necessarily subscribing to an established religion.

nadar: from nazr, literally sight; to be in the eyes of God; grace of God.

nām: the name; the name of God; the transcendent-and-immanent God; the totality of the message of Guru Nanak as nām-dharam. namāz: prayer.

nām-simiran: repetition of God's name; remembrance of God.
naubat: the drum struck at the gate of a palace or the mansion of

a noble to indicate his arrival or departure and also to indicate the time of the day.

neti neti: 'not this not this' to indicate that the ultimate reality be described in words.

nich: the low, the outcaste.

niddhī: a treasure.

ď

nindak: a detractor, a slanderer.

nirgun: without any attribute or quality.

nirvāņa: the state of liberation in Buddhism; liberation from the cycle of transmigration.

 $n\bar{u}r$: light; the divine light that pervades the universe and all human beings.

ojhā: a folk-therapist who uses magical formulae for cure of psychophysical ailments.

pādhā (pāndhā): a teacher, generally a Brahman.

pahul: water used for initiating a person as a Sikh (charan pahul) or a Singh (khande kī pahul).

pā-khāk: a compound word of 'feet' and 'dust' meaning 'dust of the feet'.

 $p\bar{a}nd\bar{a}$: a Brahman who helps devotees to perform various kinds of rites.

pandit: a Brahman; a learned Brahman; a learned person.

panth: literally a path; the people following a particular path;

collectively the followers of the Gurus; the Sikh community.

parmānand: the supreme bliss in the state of liberation.

parshād: food or sacred food.

par-upkār: welfare of others, emphasized as an ideal in the early Sikh tradition, an epithet for God and the Guru is par-upkārī. patwārī: a village accountant.

pothI: a book; synonym for granth; the two terms were used originally to indicate the mode of binding the folios.

pradakshina path: the path for circumambulation.

prasād: grace.

prem: loving devotion to God.

pūjā: worship, especially of an idol.

 $q\bar{a}z\bar{\imath}$: the judicial officer who administered Islamic law; the office survived into the early nineteenth century in the Punjab.

qiblah: a place to which reverence is due, generally used with ka'bah. rahitnāma: a manual on the Sikh way of life.

rāj jög: the state of detachment-in-attachment; a harmonious blend of spirituality and social commitment.

rai 'yat: the subject; the common tillers of land.

rasoIdar: one who works in the kitchen, a cook.

razā: God's will or pleasure.

rozah: fasting, as one of the four pillars of Islamic piety, the other three being namāz, zakāt and hajj.

sabad (sabda): the word, used for divine revelation as well as a religious composition.

sādh-sangat: an association of sādhs or holy men; a Sikh congregation. sahaj: the state of liberation.

sahajdhārī: a Sikh who is not baptized as a Singh and does not observe the Khalsa code of discipline; a non-Khalsa Sikh.

sāhu (sahūkār): a trader; a money lender.

saikh (shaikh): used for a Muslim in general.

samādhī: a state or posture of meditation.

Sanatan: a term used by Hindus and, by imitation, by the Sikhs for the pristine or ancient tradition.

sāng: a dramatic impersonation.

sangat: association; a congregation, especially of Sikhs; a local Sikh community; the collective body of the Sikhs.

sangharama: a monastery for Buddhist monks.

sanmukh: in front; in the Guru's presence.

Sant Khalsa: a term used for a Sikh baptized by the double-edged sword.

sanyāsī: a renunciate, generally a Shaivite.

sarovar: a pool, a tank, a lake.

sarrāf: a jeweller, a money-changer.

satI: a woman who burns herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband, treated as an object of worship.

satsangat: a true association, generally used for a Sikh congregation for worship.

sepidārī: the client-patron system in which customary services were rewarded in kind, seasonally and occasionally.

sevak: one who performs service, a follower; a Sikh.

shahīd: a martyr, both in the Islamic and the Sikh tradition; the place of his burial or cremation was regarded as sacred; a Muslim shahīd was often worshipped by the common people.

Shaikh: the head of a Sūfī order: a respectable Muslim.

shiqdār (sikdār): the noble in charge of a primary unit of administration under Afghan rule; called sikdār in Punjabi.

shrāddh: the rite in which the dead ancestors are fed through the mediacy of Brahmans.

shuddhī: purification, used for reconversion to the Hindu fold in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

shunya: void; state of attributelessness.

siāṇā: a wise man; a person who claimed to perform magical cure.

siddhī: the status of a siddha or a Shaiva renunciate who has attained liberation; possession of supranatural powers.

sijdah: the act of prostration before a superior authority, especially a spiritual guide or God.

sikh: a disciple, generally seen as a student or learner.

sohāgan: a married woman whose husband is alive, a devoted wife.

sunn: void; the state of attributelessness.

sūtak: the deemed state of a woman's impurity during menstruation and child birth.

tabligh: propagation of Islam.

takht: a throne; used as a metaphor for the Guru's gaddī.

Tat Khalsa: a term used for the staunch among the Khalsa in the early eighteenth and the early twentieth century.

tikkā: a mark on the forehead; the sacred mark.

tIrath: a place of pilgrimage.

tauhId: unity of Godhead.

thambha: a pillar; an establishment among the Dadu-Panthis.

umarā: plural of amīr or a noble.

upāsaka: a lay follower in Buddhism.

upāsana: praise, especially of a deity or a spiritual guide.

vanjārā: a trader; a carrier of grain and other goods for sale.

vār: a literary genre, generally used for heroic poetry; Guru Nanak used it for his religious compositions; the most famous vars in Sikh literature were composed by Bhai Gurdas in the early seventeenth century for celebrating Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Panth.

varna: literally, colour; caste; used for the ideal norm of the fourtier social order.

varnāshrama dharma: the fourfold division of society into varnas and of human life into ashramas, with duties prescribed for each. yaksha: a spirit.

yoga: the way of a yogI, involving ascetical practices.

yogI (jogI): One who is adept in yoga, generally a follower of Gorakh Nath.

zikr: remembrance of God.

zikri-i khafī: remembrance in silence.

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